

# FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

D. ERSKINE MUIR



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FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

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FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

A portrait taken immediately after her return from the Crimea

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FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

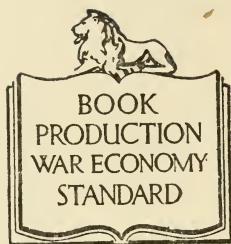
BY

D. ERSKINE MUIR

Author of "Queen Elizabeth"  
"Oliver Cromwell" &c.

*With Four Illustrations*

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*To*  
*Fanny and her Mother*

# FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

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## CHAPTER I

### A Wonderful Woman

Few women in the history of mankind have won world-wide fame. One or two have been born to great positions, such as Queen Elizabeth, or Catherine the Great of Russia, and have shown outstanding ability. Joan of Arc, a simple peasant girl, led the armies of France to victory while only a girl of eighteen. Florence Nightingale is almost unique, for she gave all her talents, and consecrated her whole life simply to relieve suffering. Madame Curie is a modern example of a woman whose discoveries have helped mankind, but she was a scientist, working at a scientific discovery, and with no knowledge that her discoveries would prove important in the fight against disease. Florence alone set herself to struggle against illness and misery; her work was aimed purely at the relief of suffering humanity, and she neither sought for fame nor for any other reward for herself.

To her we owe the foundation of modern nursing; to her the British Army owes endless improvements in living and in medical conditions; to her India owes the beginning of a health service. To her women, above all, owe an immeasurable debt for, by opening to them a new

profession, she helped to set them free. She raised their whole status as workers, and in reality, by giving them a fresh opening in life, she led the way to their entry into other branches of work. By making it possible for women to be trained as nurses, she opened a door through which women could pass, and which enabled them in time to win entry to many other occupations. In this sense she was the pioneer of women's freedom to train, and to work, and to earn, and she set them free to enter a whole new world. Before her day, the only profession open to women was that of acting as governesses. Otherwise, women could only provide for themselves by marriage, or must rely on their men-folk to support them. The fact that she not only provided a new profession, but in so doing broke down the walls of convention, in reality meant that the whole range of occupations for women was widened. In that sense she is one of the greatest of emancipators.

In some respects her life has an element of drama, almost a "fairy-tale" quality. For she was born to great wealth, and to the most comfortable and sheltered type of existence imaginable, yet she was to win her fame in scenes of unequalled horror and misery such as no woman could have anticipated being called on to witness. Again, though she had everything wealth and a luxurious home could give, she grew miserable because she craved for work, not wealth, and she had to go through years of unhappiness and restlessness at home. She was offered the choice of happiness in marriage, and she was tempted to choose that. Yet she denied herself, condemned herself apparently to a miserable, unsatisfied existence, and then out of the blue came a totally unexpected opportunity, such as no one could have foreseen, which brought not

only a complete revolution in her own life, but changed existence for many to come after. She had been condemned at home as "odd" and "difficult", and she seemed for years a failure, yet she ended by winning fame and undying glory.

Her character is a very interesting one, and one which it is difficult to understand, for so many qualities went to make it up. Her grandmother once said of her that she was "a mixture of Mary and of Martha", and that was a true criticism, for Florence had both a very spiritual side of her nature, which made her dreamy and contemplative, and also, combined with that, a practical genius for organization which has hardly been equalled. She added to this a strange, almost morbid streak, which shows in the depths of utter misery through which she passed in her life as a young woman. She has also a strain of mysticism which rarely showed, and yet which was part of her inmost being.

Her life, too, illustrates very strongly how patience and perseverance do bring great rewards. For years she went on, struggling apparently quite uselessly, making no progress, seeing time go by and nothing done, and yet all the time those years were teaching her lessons she needed to learn. They were, imperceptibly to her, giving her the training she needed. Then, when all seemed to her hopeless, suddenly she won release from her cramping life, and like a miracle at the darkest hour came dawn. She was given an unexpected and dramatic opportunity. Being able, through the character training of those long years, to seize that opportunity, she won, almost in an instant, renown and glory such as may be said to be unequalled by any women and by very few men.

To understand her difficulties and her achievements

we must look at the background of her age. For she lived in that "mid-Victorian" period when the lives of well-to-do girls and women were almost unbelievably narrow and constricted. The women of Elizabethan England, and even of Georgian England, had far more freedom. The Victorian woman was hedged round by conventions and restrictions which closed her in on every side. The well-to-do girl could not walk out alone, could not even ride or drive without some "male escort". She had no sort of profession or active work open to her. She was trained solely for marriage and for a married life, in which in turn many activities were forbidden, and which was really limited to housekeeping, child-bearing and entertaining. She might embroider, or sketch, or play the piano, but everything was narrowed down to what was considered "womanly", and that was very strictly interpreted. Yet, as always, many girls felt that such a life did not satisfy them. Any woman with ability felt crushed and stifled by the impossibility of using any gifts or power she may have possessed. George Eliot, in her preface to *Middlemarch*, expressed this: "Many have been born who found no life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action . . . who were called on to endure only a lifetime of mistakes, offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity", and she pointed out that, whereas many women could be content with the happiness of home life and desired nothing more, yet there did exist some who knew in their hearts that they had powers they longed to use, and were made miserable because they could not do so.

This consciousness of unused capacity led too to discord in the families of such girls. "Here and there a

cygnet is reared uneasily amongst the ducklings, in the brown pond." This was the case with Florence Nightingale herself. Because she had exceptional powers, she wanted to use them, but she was a member of a family which could not in the least understand such wishes, and which disapproved of all her efforts. Her mother and sister in particular were made unhappy by Flo's "strange ideas", and opposed her in everything she tried to do. So even happiness in her home was denied her, and the early years of her life are a record of growing discontent, and the terrible feeling of thwarted efforts and of hopelessness. The knowledge we have that she was right and her relatives wrong, and that she was to triumph so gloriously, gives added interest to the story of her youth, but we have always to remember that for her there was no faintest idea that she was to win so wonderful a victory. She had to struggle on with nothing but a blind instinct, and no certainty that she was right in her struggle.

One other thing is necessary to understand. In few ways have we made greater progress than in our knowledge of medicine and hygiene. But Florence lived in a time which was extremely backward in these respects, and which also, owing to the industrial revolution, was a period when conditions were extremely bad. The great manufacturing towns had sprung up, factories and mills had brought a huge population to be crowded in badly built, undrained cities, where slum conditions of almost unbelievable horror existed. A few men, such as Lord Shaftesbury, were devoting their lives to the attempt to improve the conditions of the working classes. But such attempts were strictly left to the men; no woman was considered fit in any way to concern herself with such matters. It would not have been considered possible that



any woman had the capacity to deal with public affairs, and most certainly it was considered entirely unfitting for any "lady" to occupy herself with such matters. We can judge of this from the books of the period, which show clearly how it was considered especially "improper" for women to concern themselves with such things. Dirt, disease, sanitation, were no subjects for "ladies" to discuss, much less try to deal with.

Contemporary novels, such as *The Three Brides* of C. M. Yonge, show the horror with which women who tried to improve the dreadful sanitary conditions of towns or villages were regarded. Epidemics of deadly diseases often figure in the books of the day: cholera, diphtheria and typhoid were shown ravaging the poor, as in Dickens's *Bleak House* and Kingsley's *Alton Locke*. Yet nothing was done. Fresh air and ventilation were actually considered harmful. Yet it was with these very matters of health and hygiene that Florence wished to deal. She had a natural instinct which drove her to wish to study sickness and nursing. She once wrote: "The first thought I remember was nursing work," and this deep-seated instinct was to enable her to triumphantly overthrow all the prejudices and conventions of her period. She was to show that a woman could take up these very subjects, that she could fight for proper sanitation, and that she could study reports and figures of health and mortality. She was to show that a woman could work in an army hospital, could understand hospital hygiene, and work until a hospital such as St. Thomas's was built according to her ideas, with windows and blocks giving proper ventilation and light. She was to show that a woman could lead the fight to give better sanitation to India. And when a writer such as Charles Dickens could move people to compassion by his descrip-



tion of the horrors of slums or the miseries of a workhouse child, Florence could carry through the seemingly impossible task of improving the workhouse wards, and introducing properly trained women to look after the miserable sick poor who crowded there.

She achieved all this partly through sheer inborn ability. One man<sup>1</sup> said of her: "Her gift was her power to dominate, which lifted her from out the ranks of those who are only 'able' to the highest reached by those who are great." He also said: "The males at that time in England were giving proofs of a lameness in the use of brain-power . . . they needed the propulsion of the quicker, the woman's brain, to set them going. A woman proved abler than the masculine rulers who had made utter default."

Yet this ability, this power, must have lain unused had it not been for the long patient struggle, lasting through her youth, to try to train herself in the direction where she knew her gifts lay. This struggle, the sacrifices which it involved, even to giving up her chance of a happy marriage, is one of the most important and interesting features in her life. It shows so clearly how intense unselfishness and unwearied plodding along a seemingly endless uphill road did in the end bring great reward. It shows too that success does not come without previous effort, for without the training so slowly, so laboriously and so bitterly attained, Florence Nightingale would have been useless and could never have seized the opportunity when it came. It shows the old truth, hidden in fairy tales, that struggles and misfortunes do sometimes prove just the testing ground, the probation, which must be passed through before happiness is attained.

<sup>1</sup> Kinglake. *Invasion of the Crimea*.

## CHAPTER II

## A Happy Childhood

Florence was to prove herself so remarkable a woman that it is interesting to look at her family, and we find that, as is so often the case, an individual of genius springs from a stock which produced no other person of outstanding ability. She came, on both sides, from the well-to-do upper middle classes. Her father, William Edward, was originally from a family called Shore, but he changed his name when a great-uncle of his mother, a Mr. Nightingale, left him a fortune on condition he took that name. That great-uncle left him a property called Lea Hurst in Derbyshire. William was rich, and he was progressive. He believed in doing what he thought was his duty by the people on his estate, so he set up schools, this being before the days of state schools, and he looked after his tenants in a "charitable" way. He was rather interested in politics, and once stood for Parliament as a Whig, though he failed to get in. He was a gentle, thoughtful man, very charming and talented. He loved learning and was a good scholar. His daughter always considered that he had wasted his life and abilities, for he never really did anything very seriously or very thoroughly. She said: "He has had good impulses from his childhood up . . . always acted from impulse. He has never been forced to carry anything out. . . . But he was not happy. Why not? He has not had enough to do. Not enough to fill his faculties. When I see him eating his breakfast as if the destinies of a nation depended upon his getting done, carrying his

plate about the room, delighting in being in a hurry, pretending to himself week after week that he is going to Buxton, or elsewhere, I say to myself, 'How happy that man would be with a factory under his supervision, with the interests of two or three hundred men to look after.' " Sweet and charming, he wanted all around him to be content, and left to himself he might have encouraged his brilliant daughter, or at least not opposed her when she wished to strike out for herself.

He could not, however, stand up to his wife. She was a far more dominating person. She came from a family of eleven children, the Smiths of Parndon Hall, Essex. Her father was a strong reformer—he had been a friend of William Wilberforce, and joined in the campaign to free the slaves. He was a radical M.P. and sat for Norwich. He was a Unitarian, and warmly upheld the cause of liberty and freedom in religion and other matters. Frances, the mother of Florence, inherited much of her father's strength of mind, but his liberal ideas in her case were limited by her notions as to what was "proper" or correct. Before the accession of Queen Victoria, women as a whole were less bound down by rules of "propriety", but as the mid-nineteenth century drew on, ideas became far stricter. Mrs. Nightingale was only keeping to the rules so strongly insisted on by everyone of her time and class. Actually Florence herself to a great degree accepted all this. The Victorians were especially firm in the absolute duty of children to obey their parents. All novels of the period show us that it was unthinkable for any right-minded child to act against its parents' wishes. Flo was always to be a very conscientious person, and therefore it was impossible, in her eyes, for her to disobey her mother. When she wanted

to take up work, she felt absolutely bound to have her mother's consent, and it was because Mrs. Nightingale would not consent that Flo was to be doomed to years of unhappiness and struggle. Even when the great crisis of her life came, and she was a mature woman, we shall find she would not accept the call to go to the Crimea without writing home to find if her parents would agree.

Florence's father, William Nightingale, married Frances Smith in 1818, just at the period when the end of the Napoleonic wars had, after an interval of nearly thirty years, made it possible once more to travel on the Continent. So William set out with his bride for a great tour of the Continent, and arriving in Italy, stayed first for some months at Naples, where his elder child, a girl, was born. He then moved to Florence, where his second daughter was born on 12th May, 1820. The first child was given the strange name of Parthenope, after an ancient Greek colony near Naples. Fortunately the family shortened this to "Parthe", or the even more flippantly modern "Pop". The second child was called after the city of her birth "Florence", which in those days was a name not usually given to girls, but to boys, such as Shelley's youngest son, "Percy Florence". Here, too, the family did not call her by her full name, she was always to them "Flo".

On both sides she came of tough, long-lived people. Her mother lived to be ninety-two, her grandmother to be ninety-five, her great-aunt to be ninety, and "Flo" herself was to live to be ninety, and die in the early years of the twentieth century. She came of a family, too, which had brains, and believed in education. Her father was a clever man, with ability above the average. Himself learned, he wished his daughters to be well educated. He

was broad minded, and in many ways progressive. Once he exclaimed: "How I hate Tories, mighty by beer, brandy and money!" He was himself very rich, a great part of his large income coming from a lead mine which he inherited, and he had married a rich wife. His wealth caused him to lead the life of a leisured country gentleman, and this was to prove one of the sources of Florence's unhappiness.

She herself said later that she thought her father's wealth had "proved an affliction", by which she meant partly that "he never knew what it meant to struggle", partly that it prevented him from using his undoubted gifts, and from realizing that others wished to use their gifts. In his case, he did not really wish to use them, and was perfectly content with his agreeable and very comfortable existence. His daughter was made of different stuff, and certainly to her this way of living was entirely unsatisfactory, while their wealth and position acted as further stumbling blocks in her way. A working woman could at least *work*, but a wealthy young lady most certainly could not, and to work was what Florence always wished to do. Her mother was a woman of a good deal of practical ability. She was a most excellent housekeeper, and perhaps Florence's genius for organization came from her. The fact that she was a member of such a large family proved one of the happy things in her daughter's life.

For, besides providing her two little daughters with a very large number of young cousins, with whom they exchanged visits, Mrs. Nightingale's own brothers and sisters in some ways were more in sympathy with Flo than was her own mother. One of her aunts (Aunt Mai, married to Mrs. Nightingale's brother) was to prove a



most devoted supporter, and, in general, we have the feeling that the uncles and aunts were inclined to support Flo, and not to share her mother's views, though they never dared to encourage the daughter's rebellion.

Her mother was apparently chiefly interested in social success, and her wish for her daughters to "shine in society" was to prove one of the chief difficulties in Florence's life.

In childhood, of course, none of these drawbacks appeared. The two little Nightingale girls seemed to have been born to a very fortunate and happy lot. Their parents were devoted to them; they had beautiful surroundings, everything that wealth could give. Mr. Nightingale, being very rich, had not only a house in London, but he also owned two country houses, one at Embley, near the New Forest, where they usually spent the winter, and one at Lea Hurst, in Derbyshire. Lea Hurst was the place Florence loved best, and she usually spoke of it as "home". William Nightingale built the house itself, a comfortable red-brick Victorian house, with gables and great oriel windows surrounded by beautiful trees and lawns, and with flowering creepers climbing up the walls of the house. Considering his wealth it was not a very large house; it had, for example, fifteen bedrooms, which Florence did not think made it "a mansion". William was fond of gardening and of flowers, a taste which his daughter inherited, and Lea Hurst had terraces and flower beds "blazing with hollyhocks, geraniums, nasturtium and dahlias", in all the brilliant colours beloved of the Victorians. The lawns below the terraces sloped down to the river, a river which Flo always loved, and years later, in the dreadful hospital at Scutari, she once said how she could often find, in the midst of such horror, comfort

and refreshment by remembering the sound of that river rippling along below the windows of her home.

Yet again, in a manner characteristic of the Victorians, though the house was comfortably and indeed beautifully furnished, for the Nightingales were people of taste, the bedrooms of the two children were very simple and bare. Flo's room, all through her life at home, had only bare, scrubbed boards, "with a piece of drab carpet covering a bit of it", plain, stone-coloured walls, and a few bookshelves. Young people in those days were not given much comfort, nor prettiness, in their own rooms; simplicity and austerity was the rule, and therefore in one sense Flo was not to find such very marked difference when at long last she broke away from this home and found greater happiness in the wards of institutions and hospitals. Her simple Spartan room at Lea Hurst helped her here.

Flo, as she was always called by her family and friends, was a pretty little girl, brought up, as we have seen, in a very rich family, and with everything apparently to give her the usual happy life of a well-to-do Victorian. She never, at first, seemed to be in any way extraordinary, and certainly for many years there was no idea that she was to prove one of the most remarkable women of any period, with a career that was completely startling to her contemporaries.

From the first, she showed herself to be an intelligent and gifted child. Both she and her sister were clever, but they were very different in disposition. Parthe, who was always considered the cleverer of the two, was gay, and found her happiness where her mother wished her to find it, in amusement and society. Flo was less easy. She was rather a naughty little girl, wilful and outspoken, and full of character. In one of the first childish letters she ever

wrote she says: "Give my love to all, except to Miss W.," her governess, who had clearly vexed her in some way, and whom in general she disliked. Not apparently because she disliked "lessons"; she did not, she enjoyed learning, but because in some way that governess was objectionable to her.

Flo was high spirited and unruly, and this governess perhaps earned her dislike from a habit she had of making Flo wear a large label, marked "good" or "bad" to show what her behaviour was each day, an action which any child would resent, and which reminds us of David Copperfield's misery when he was obliged to wear a somewhat similar label at his school. Flo specially loved an out-door life. She was fond of dogs and loved horses. She learnt to ride when she was a very little child, and always rode well. This was to prove very valuable to her when she went to the Crimea, where roads were so bad and riding was essential. We shall also find that her love of horses made her suffer when she saw how the poor animals starved and died in the Crimea, and roused her to special indignation against Lord Cardigan, the cavalry commander, who showed no sort of care for the horses. She was much given to grumbling, and her father told her she must fight against this highly unattractive habit. She was very shy, and once said: "If I were sure no one would notice me I should be quite happy." She loved flowers, and years later, in the Crimea, people would know she had been in a room by the fact of finding bowls of flowers beautifully arranged and left there to please others.

In those days there were very few schools for girls, and the well-to-do employed governesses to educate their daughters. Charlotte Brontë's life pictures both the unhappiness of a governess and also the poor qualifications



which were usually all that they could offer. Charlotte herself, though very scrappily educated, was considered capable of teaching English and French, and sewing and music and drawing, and was paid £16 a year for teaching these subjects to three or four children of varying ages. "Governessing" was then the one and only career open to women, usually of gentle birth and some education. Parents like the Nightingales realized that such teaching was not good enough for their clever, promising little girls, and William Nightingale, like many other fathers of those days, undertook to teach his daughters himself. So Florence learnt grammar and languages from her father. He taught her Italian, and Latin, and Greek. When she was in the Crimea she knew enough Latin to use it to talk to the monks, who could not speak English or French. She read Homer and Plato and she studied philosophy. Most helpful of all to her in later life, she learnt mathematics thoroughly, for which she had a natural gift. This was to prove one of the things which helped her most in her fierce battle for reform. She understood statistics, and later studied advanced foreign books on this subject, and as one cause of the miseries and disasters of the Crimea was the ignorance of the authorities due to the entire lack of statistics of deaths and sickness, she could use her gift and her training with devastating effect.

This training of her intellect, and this knowledge of mathematics and languages, were perhaps of far greater importance than the rather vague attraction towards "nursing" which she is generally supposed to have shown.

Certainly all tales of her childhood relate how her sister "Pop" was always rough with her dolls and broke

them, while "Flo" would bandage and nurse the damaged toys. It is true, too, that she loved looking after sick animals. When a collie, belonging to one of her father's shepherds, after being stoned by some boys, had a badly injured leg and his master feared the dog must be destroyed, Flo begged to be allowed to try her hand. Helped by the rector of the parish, she put on fomentations until the leg healed, and the dog was saved. When years later she became so famous, this story was taken up, and all over England cottage walls were hung with pictures of Florence nursing the sick dog. Oddly enough, in the light of what was to come, her first-known piece of handwriting is a little scrap with a prescription. It runs: "Fifteen grains for an old woman, eleven for a young woman, and seven for a child," though what grains, and for what illness, we do not know.

She liked babies, and was specially happy when one of her mother's sisters, "Aunt Mai" (later one of those who helped her in the Crimea), came to stay at Lea Hurst with her baby boy. Flo was allowed to look after him, and when the child's nurse fell ill, she bathed the baby and put him to bed.

Yet many other little girls have had these same interests and inclinations, and it was something over and above these fairly common instincts for nursing which gave Florence her inspiration.

Partly she was helped by another of her mother's sisters, "Aunt Julia", who was interested in the conditions of the poor. Encouraged by this aunt, whose charitable activities were just tolerated by Mrs. Nightingale, Flo would go with Julia to visit the cottagers in the village. Here she saw people who were ill and needed help, and here too she came into contact with tragedy.

She was only ten years old when the wife of a man, who was lodge-keeper at a big house nearby, killed herself in a fit of insanity. The event made the deepest impression on Flo, who wrote out in her round copybook writing, a horrified account of it all. She described the husband first knocking at the locked door, then breaking it in, the floor of the bedroom swimming in blood, and a message scrawled by the poor wife with a knife dipped in the blood, and the poor little children standing round and gazing at the dreadful sight. This shows us perhaps one of the strange and almost morbid streaks in Florence.

For she had in some ways a double personality. In one sense she was very, practical, very competent, very clear, a girl with remarkable powers of organization and a determined will. Yet she had a perfectly different side to her character, and from this her true inspiration sprang. She was very imaginative and dreamy, and again and again in her diaries she reproaches herself for this, and for the time she lost in her vague thoughts. But as she grew older these "dreams" seemed to her to reveal a hidden purpose, and she came to believe that in them something was being made clear to her. She brooded and pondered, and then, when she was seventeen, something came to her. She believed that she received a "call" from God. On 17th February, 1837, she wrote in her diary: "This day God called me to his service." Often in later years she would refer to this event in her diaries or letters; she never forgot it. Yet she never told anyone and never wrote in her diaries exactly what she felt that call to be, or how it came about, we know no more than those brief entries tell us. But the conviction sank deep into her, and became the centre of her inner life. God had called her to some special work.

It was this inner life, this unshakable belief that she was called to a special task, which made her stand firm in her resolution to do the work for which she believed she was intended and consecrated. She had to face the bitter opposition of her mother, to stand against the mockery of her sister, and, greatest sacrifice of all, she had to give up the chance of love and married happiness. Yet she did all this, just because in her inmost heart she had so firm a conviction that she believed she must sacrifice all to that vague uncertain purpose, not clear even to herself.

We know that she was right, that she was destined to do a great and noble work for all suffering humanity, but she had no such certainty, and she therefore found herself condemned to a long and miserable struggle with nothing to nerve or guide her but that inner call.

### CHAPTER III

## Years of Revolt

The girlhood of Florence Nightingale at first seemed to follow the perfectly ordinary lines of a rich and attractive young girl in Victorian England. Flo was generally considered to be a charming person. She was rather tall, and very slim. She had grey eyes, which Mrs. Gaskell later spoke of as "the merriest eyes I ever saw". She had very beautiful, thick light-brown hair, and a most

lovely, delicate complexion. A picture of her, sitting with her sister, painted when she was about eighteen, shows her slim and graceful, with her hair parted in the middle, and twisted up round a high comb on the top of her head. She is wearing a rose-pink dress, with a smart little brown-and-white striped apron, and little black mittens. She sits there with a piece of embroidery in her hands, and looks very gentle and quiet and sedate. People often spoke of her "elegance", and all through her life her portraits give that impression of good taste and style, with a certain distinction, and perhaps it was this indefinable charm which the wounded soldiers of the Crimea were later to appreciate, standing out as it did against a background of horror. She had also that "most excellent thing in woman", a beautiful, gentle, silvery voice. She was also full of fun, and at first full of enjoyment of life. She liked dancing and opera, she played the piano well, and sang, and at eighteen called herself "music mad". She enjoyed travelling, especially in the newly invented trains, and said, "how much pleasanter it is in these public conveyances than in one's own stupid private carriage drawn by four fat horses". When she was twenty-one she had a season in Paris, where she met many famous French men and women. She went to Switzerland and Italy, and she confessed to herself that despite her shyness she had "a great desire to shine in society".

The Nightingales had a great many cousins, and she used to pay rounds of country house visits, so that she had plenty of young people to consort with, and she showed herself as enjoying music and singing and amateur theatricals. She was rather careless over her clothes, and her sister once wrote: "*Make Flo wear her white silk frock to-night.*" In her schoolroom days, when she was eager



to learn, she used to get up very early indeed, at 4 a.m., to study her Latin and Greek, but now, in her "young-lady" days, she grew lazy and would not get up, and vexed her mother by being perpetually late for breakfast.

One of her great friends was Byron's daughter, Lady Lovelace, who shared Flo's enthusiasm for mathematics. Lady Lovelace wrote a poem about her friend, with the lines:

I heard her soft and silver voice,  
I deem her fair, yes very fair,  
Yet some there are who pass her by.

Her beautiful soft voice was nature's gift, but her upbringing taught her self-control and composure, and gave her beautiful manners. Later on, in the Crimea, the soldiers loved her gentle manners, and the generals and the commander-in-chief, Lord Raglan, commented on them with pleasure, while even the critical Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort specially praised her for the same.

Yet this gentle exterior was one of the contradictory things about her. She was naturally very amusing and outspoken, and her personal letters are full of racy, saucy remarks and humour. Her gracefulness and apparent calmness hid a very stormy temper and strong will, and when occasion was to call it forth, as it did, no human being was of more iron determination or better able to hold her own.

Her sister Pop was considered to be more brilliant and more amusing than Flo. She was equally good at languages, but her special gift was painting, and it is to her we owe some of the sketches and portraits of Flo as a girl. Parthe was less shy and got on better in society. She had no desire for any other life than the one she enjoyed,

and the two did not get on well together. Parthe was very fond of criticizing her younger sister, and from the very beginning she disliked Flo's efforts to "work" amongst the villagers. In this she was backed up by her mother, and as time went on Mrs. Nightingale began to find more and more fault with Flo.

For gradually there came signs that Florence was not altogether happy or satisfied. The round of gaieties ceased to amuse her. She became bored. She had offers of marriage, but she refused her cousin Henry when he wished to marry her, and she showed no signs of liking any of the many young men she met. She began to want more occupation, and in those days, for "young ladies", there was none. Her mother naturally did all the management of the house; there were plenty of servants and no need for the girls to do anything. Flo was, one summer, as a concession, allowed to make the jam, and she said she gazed at her "fifty-six pots, with the proud satisfaction of an artist". What else could she do? Her father was squire of the village, and she began to go down to the cottages and look after the sick people. Soon she began to grow uneasy, for there was so much sickness and so little was done. She blazed with indignation over one poor woman whom she considered had died from neglect. "I saw a poor woman die this summer because there was no one to sit up with her at night." Her mother disapproved of all this, and friction began to grow between the two. As she grew more restless, and more aware of the evils at her very door, Flo became more impatient with her own life, and more anxious to do something for others. Yet she was checked in this, and as a result became more and more bored.

Victorians loved reading aloud, or rather we might say

Victorian men loved reading aloud; Victorian women and girls had to listen. Almost all Victorian novels describe the family gathered in the drawing-room in the evening, while some book was read aloud. But William Nightingale did what, in his daughter's eyes, was worse. She disliked hearing even a book read, but her father read the whole of *The Times* aloud every evening. "Boring to desperation" she called it, and wrote: "Oh! how often have I watched the clock and seen its hands crawl round to the hour of ten!"

She said to a friend that the women of the eighteenth century were happier than those of the nineteenth because they had more to do, by which she meant that in earlier days ladies had to supervise such activities as the making of beer, or candles, or compounding of medicines. She began to weary desperately for the chance to fit herself for active work. She realized that she must be trained before she could accomplish anything. Later her advice to women was "qualify yourselves as a man does". Yet it seemed impossible for her to obtain any training; her mother's opposition, indeed the whole circumstances of her life, seemed to cut her off entirely from the hope of doing what she now anxiously wished to do, train as a nurse.

To understand the horror with which Florence's ideas as to taking up nursing were received, we must understand the position of Victorian England as regards the nursing of people who were ill.

The well-to-do were invariably nursed in their own homes; they did not go to hospitals, which were for the poor, and there were no such institutions as nursing homes. They were not nursed by trained people, for there were none available; such trained nurses as existed were those in the public hospitals. They were looked after by their



relations, who had only the traditional knowledge handed down by women in caring for the sick. So little was known as regards general principles of health that the state of affairs in home nursing was truly deplorable. No one believed in fresh air or ventilation, so, in the homes of people who were ill, windows were carefully kept closed. Perhaps the best-known instance is Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who lived for many years in a room where the windows were never opened except in summer, and where ivy was trained up over the panes. Even the most serious illnesses such as smallpox or diphtheria were nursed by quite untrained and inexperienced people, who had little idea what remedies should be employed. Thus Esther, in Dickens's *Bleak House*, first nurses Jo, who has smallpox, in a hay-loft with no idea beyond "covering him up to keep him warm", and when she is herself ill with the same disease is looked after entirely by a little servant girl of fifteen, though the household is a wealthy one. Or one reads <sup>1</sup> of a patient with a severe internal hæmorrhage being "refreshed with a strawberry or with iced lemonade", while in another case <sup>2</sup> a girl of eighteen nurses a father and mother and brother, dying of typhus, and she "moves about the room knocking everything down with her huge inflated petticoats, stuffed out with horsehair", and for four days neither washes herself or even brushes her hair, nor takes off her soiled frock. Thermometers, of course, were not used, "fever" was only guessed at from the heat of the patients head or hands, and immense belief was felt in "stimulants", meaning, as a rule, "port wine". How enlightened Florence was, and how very different her ideas, both as to fresh air, medicines and dress, we shall see later.

<sup>1</sup> *Pillars of the House*. C. M. Yonge.

<sup>2</sup> *The Trial*. C. M. Yonge.

The only class of "trained" nurses were really those women who were employed in the great hospitals of the big cities, who were very occasionally called in to look after well-to-do people who had no relations or attendants. But these women were of a low type; they were often drunken, and one surgeon of a big London hospital wrote: "The nurses here are all drunkards, without exception, sisters and all." Later on, in the Crimea, too many of these "nurses" proved drunkards, and had to be sent back to England.

There also were a number of women who went to work in the hospital so as to bring themselves into touch with the doctors and medical students. All were not bad. One of Florence's most trusted helpers in the Crimea was Mrs. Wardroper, head nurse at St. Thomas' Hospital, but contemporaries all agree as to the low, drunken type which was most usual. Dickens's famous character Sairey Gamp was no caricature, though she was not a nurse from a hospital, but an independant nurse who, though usually practising as a midwife, was employed by a doctor to look after any of his patients for whom no one else was available. Dickens's novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*, in which appear the immortal figures of the two nurses, Sairey Gamp and Betsy Prigg, appeared just two years before the Crimean War broke out. Naturally Dickens exaggerated his characters, as he often did, but we have always the actual fact that doctors and matrons in the hospitals agreed that nurses were very much given to drink. Mrs. Gamp, looking after the fever-stricken man at the inn, "administered the patient's medicine by the simple process of clutching his windpipe to make him gasp, and immediately pouring it down his throat". Then she settled down to make herself comfortable for the night. "I a'most

forgot the piller, I declare!" drawing it away from the sick man. "There! Now he's as comfortable as he can be, I'm sure! I must try to make myself as much so as I can." While to the chambermaid she says: "If they draws the Brighton Tipper here, I takes *that* ale at night, my love. . . . And whatever you do, young woman, don't bring more than a shilling's worth of gin and water warm when I rings the bell a second time." By which she really meant she did want more than "a shilling's worth".

We can compare this with the true utterance of Lady Palmerston: "If the nurses do drink how can they be blamed? It must be so dull at night."

In the Crimea, one of the greatest difficulties Florence met with was the drunkenness of these "lay" nurses, and we are reminded of Sairey Gamp herself when we find Flo writing: "I must bar these fat, drunken old dames; above fourteen stone we *will not have*."

Florence herself was, we may say, "a born nurse", but above all she realized that nursing, as she wrote, "needed intelligence, and it also required proper training". Her own instinct, as we have seen, prompted her to wish to nurse, and her experience, slight as it was in her home and village, made her see that training she must somehow obtain.

Yet here at once she came into violent conflict with her family, especially her mother and sister. They disliked what they called "these eternal poor", and Parthe had no opinion of Florence's capabilities as a nurse. "When I was ill," she wrote to a cousin, "Flo was a shocking nurse." As to training, Mrs. Nightingale would not for one moment tolerate the idea that Flo could possibly associate with women of the type which was common

in the hospitals, or with such nurses as "Sairey Gamp". There was, in England of that day, no alternative (for a Protestant at least; for Catholics there were nursing sisterhoods), and if to become a nurse meant that Florence would have to mix with this type of woman, we cannot wonder at her mother's violent dislike of such a prospect. Parthe shared her mother's view, and felt that any such activities by Florence would bring the whole family into disgrace. Both mother and sister were miserable lest these "queer" ideas of Flo's should be allowed to develop. Mr. Nightingale was not so hostile, but he did not stand out against his wife and elder daughter.

Poor Florence longed passionately to be allowed to make some effort to fill her life. In her diary she quoted some words of Carlyle: "Blessed is he who has found his work, his life-purpose."

She was a little cheered up when some well-known Americans came to stay at Lea Hurst: Dr. Howe and his wife, Julia, who wrote the famous American battle song, "Mine eyes have seen the coming of the Glory of the Lord". Flo asked Dr. Howe if he thought "it would be a dreadful thing to take up nursing?" He said, "Not at all; a very good thing." His wife, too, accustomed to the greater freedom enjoyed by American women of that day, saw no reason why Flo should not take up the work she longed to do. Encouraged by this, and by the support of one of their father's medical friends, Flo asked her parents whether she might go and train at Salisbury hospital for a few months. This was in 1845, when she was twenty-five years old. In those early Victorian days most girls were married and settled at twenty, indeed, marriage at sixteen was not uncommon, so Flo could no longer be reckoned as very young. Nor could her parents

hope that she was very likely to marry; she still refused any "offers" made to her.

Her request, however, was instantly refused. Her mother objected at once "not because of the physically revolting parts", as she realized any woman was expected to face the disagreeable aspects of nursing in her own home, but because of "things about the surgeons and the nurses". By which she meant the low standards of the nurses' behaviour towards men.

Florence was terribly miserable over this decision. She wrote in her diary, "My imagination is filled with the misery of this world". She felt she had the power to relieve that misery, yet was denied by her social position and by convention. She was, in her own way, deeply religious, and she said she "tried to trust to God", but she began now to dwell in her own religious world, and said she "did not care about going to Church". Try as hard as she could to bear her trials she suffered acutely, and one sad entry in her diary runs: "There are private martyrs as well as those who have been burnt or drowned." As the months went on she found her daily life more and more unendurable. "I have nothing to do but to sit and crochet in my mother's drawing-room, or else to marry and look well at the head of my husband's table." She was unwilling to marry and grew more and more desperate. Another entry in her diary at this time runs: "I have no desire now but to die. There is not a night that I do not lie down in my bed wishing that I may leave it no more. It is not the misery, the unhappiness that I feel so insupportable, but to feel it growing on me—and no hope, no help. This is the sting of death."

She could not get on with her sister, who was perfectly happy in her social gaieties, and who resented the gloom



caused by Florence's unhappiness, and who utterly disapproved of all Flo's ideas. Flo wrote: "I can hardly open my mouth without giving her vexation, and everything I say or do is a subject of annoyance to her." She wondered desperately why she was so different from her family. "What makes me so unlike my parents?" She knew them to be good and kind, but she wrote sadly: "I must expect no sympathy or help from them. I know that they *cannot* understand me. I know that to try for their sympathy and fail, irritates me." Parthe, for her part, refused to be in any way impressed by Flo's wish to serve mankind. "Flo has little or none of what is called philanthropy, she is very ambitious and wants to regenerate the world in one grand coup-de-main," she wrote to a cousin.

Flo tried to win over her father, who was more open-minded. She persuaded him to take her to political meetings, and once he took her to a Chartist meeting,<sup>1</sup> where she talked to the working-class men who led that movement.

She went to stay with some of her mother's relations. Her grandmother was devoted to her, and when Flo went to her at Leeds she was able to visit working men's clubs, and she did the same while staying with her friends the Bracebridges in Birmingham. In this way she did come into contact with working-class men, she did discuss politics with them, and looking ahead we may see how she did in this way get an idea of the ordinary working-class men of the towns, which possibly helped her in her experiences with the Crimean soldiers. She had a glimpse of their homes, and of their outlook, which she could never have got simply through her contact as squire's daughter with country villagers.

<sup>1</sup> To her circle that was equivalent to being friendly with Communists to-day.

Yet these small efforts to find an outlet did little more than make her fret more miserably against her narrow life. "A trade, a profession, to fill and employ all my faculties, that is what I feel essential," she wrote. She tried to be patient, and her diary shows how she tried to submit. She tried to call her religion to her aid. She imagined herself speaking to God, pouring out her misery and her desires. "And he answered me, 'All that you want will come. Cannot you wait?'"

The fact that time was passing, that she was growing older, and had no prospect of attaining her goal, made it almost impossible for her to be patient, for she felt she was "waiting without hope".

## CHAPTER IV

### Marriage or Work?

In the autumn of 1848, when she was twenty-eight years old, things grew so strained and Flo was fretting so much, that it was decided once more to try sending her to travel abroad with friends. She was sent on a trip to Italy with Mr. and Mrs. Bracebridge, who were later to help her in the Crimea. That trip, which was intended to divert her mind from this strange wish for work and a career, did actually prove the deciding point in her life. Far from changing her ideas, it was destined to help her to take the first steps along the road which led to the fulfilment of her ideals, and to the fame which awaited her.



Yet, at the time, each little item did not seem important, though now we can see how everything fitted together to form a connected chain. First, she met with a young couple on their honeymoon, Sidney Herbert and his wife, a charming young pair who were to return to make their home near her parents at Embley. She became friends with both, and with Sidney, who was one of the most fascinating men of the time, she found she had mutual interests. He, too, rich and talented, and with a great position, was passionately interested in the state of the poor, especially those who were ill or convalescing. He had a scheme for setting up convalescent homes, and later spent over £30,000 in building one. He was at this time a member of Parliament, and with his great abilities was clearly likely to reach Cabinet rank. This was the man who, six years later, was to give her the great opportunity of her life. In talks with him, Florence realized more clearly than before that there were people of her own rank who could understand and sympathize with her ideals.

The Italian tour indeed showed Florence both what she was herself, and more vaguely, how she might take heart and start out on fresh lines towards achieving her aims. She had for long been in rebellion against the narrowness of her home life, typical as it was of the life of a well-to-do English girl of that time. Now she began to feel she was in sympathy with rebellion against more than convention. Italy had just passed through the revolution of 1848. The Italians had risen, though in vain, in an effort to drive out the Austrians, and Rome itself for a brief while had become a Republic under Garibaldi. Florence sympathized ardently with the Republican ideal, and even this move towards ideals of liberty strengthened her in her present struggle. She felt herself to be at heart

in sympathy with the oppressed, and wrote: "I was born myself to be a rag-tag and bob-tail, for I am nothing better than a ragamuffin." She felt this perhaps all the more in her reaction from the bondage in which her family's wealth and position kept her. She found interest and an outlet for another side of her character in a different direction too.

She was interested in religion, as she was indeed all her life. Her family had been Unitarians, but her mother had joined the Church of England, and Flo was brought up as a member. She was not satisfied with the part played by the Church in the life of the nation, and when she talked to her working-class friends, noted that as far as she could tell, most of them had no belief. Later on she tried to write a book to convince the working classes of the truth of religion, for she believed that religion was necessary to all mankind. But no Church really satisfied her, though she herself remained a member of the Church of England. At this period of her life (1848) she made friends with many Catholics, and found much in their Church which appealed to her, especially their Sisterhoods, in which many women found work and happiness. She became very friendly with Cardinal Manning, whom she met in Rome and who ardently hoped she might become a Catholic. She was especially drawn to him through this interest in work for the poor. She confided to him her hopes and ideals, and he encouraged her. He saw no reason why she should not attempt to take up this nursing for which she so longed. In Catholic countries there were besides the religious orders the Sisters of Charity who acted as nurses, and he introduced her to the Convent School of Sante Croce, at the Trinità de' Monte, near the famous Spanish Steps in Rome. There Florence

saw women doing the very work she longed to do, but they were, of course, women dedicated to a religious life, and in their institutions there were none of the difficulties to be met with in Protestant England, where such religious communities were unknown. She began to see that the difficulty to be faced was how to get a training as an ordinary woman, not bound by any religious vow, in some place other than a Catholic convent. She remembered that she had once met Elizabeth Fry, who had told her of some Protestant institution in Germany, and she stored away her experiences of the Sisters of Charity with that vague recollection.

Next, in Rome she met Lord Ashley (later Lord Shaftesbury), the great philanthropist, and here we must notice one point. Some Victorian noblemen were men who devoted their whole lives and their energies to trying to improve the miserable lot of the working classes. Florence was in a position to meet these men, and the sad fact that her mother and sister were both what we should call "snobs" helped Florence, for neither could object to her friendship with such men as Sidney Herbert and Ashley.

At that time Lord Ashley was working hard to set up schools for the "ragged children" of London, and when Flo returned to England that winter, she persuaded her mother to let her go and work at one of these "ragged schools".

Next spring her parents, still clinging to the hope that travel might distract her from these occupations, sent her off to tour Egypt and Greece. But Flo, true to her peculiar self, even while enjoying antiquities and classical beauty—as she always did—still managed to include, besides visits to the Parthenon, other visits to orphanages

run by missionaries from the U.S.A., and schools for the deaf and dumb.

While she was travelling in Greece she was one day visiting the Acropolis of Athens. There she found some small boys ill-treating a little owl. She rescued the bird, and made a pet of it, calling it "Athene" after the Greek goddess, who has the owl as one of her emblems. She took it back to England with her, and this little bird became one of the joys of her life. There are many sketches, made by her sister, of Athene, either alone or with Florence. A few years later, in the Crimean hospitals, we find her writing home to ask Parthe to make several copies of a water-colour sketch of Flo with the owl, since some of her helpers, notably Nurse Roberts, her ardent admirer, liked the portrait so much they longed for copies.

When the Greek tour was ended, Flo managed to score one point. She induced her friends to make the return journey through Germany, and now she went to see that place of which she had been told by Elizabeth Fry, the Institution of Kaiserwerth, near Düsseldorf, founded by a Protestant minister, Fliedner, and his wife. This institute cared for children, and for the sick, and it was served by women, who were not nuns, but ordinary women, bound by no vows, but working with a religious inspiration. She was able to see the place only as a visitor, but she stayed a few days, and was most deeply impressed. She noticed, above all, the cleanliness and brightness of the wards, the gay flower garden, the happiness of both nurses and patients. The whole atmosphere and surroundings struck her as beautiful, and formed a painful contrast with the orphanages and hospitals of England. She saw that here was the sort of work and life she had dreamed of. We cannot exaggerate

the importance of this visit, for here, at last, she began to see a way out of her difficulties, since she saw a practical model which could, she believed, be copied in Protestant England.

In her diary she wrote: " Oh God, thou hast put into my heart this great desire to devote myself to the sick and sorrowful," and she made up her mind that here she must come to learn, and to receive the training which she needed.

She went home resolved to battle with her parents and obtain their consent.

Yet now, just when she thought she saw the possibility of getting the training she wished for, under conditions which her parents might approve, she found herself faced with the hardest decision of her life. Up to this point she had struggled with her family; now she had to wage a fierce fight with herself. She had to decide whether she should marry or refuse to do so. She had been unhappy in her parents' home, but now she was offered the chance of a really happy home of her own. She had no illusions as to the best hope of happiness for women. She said firmly that she " believed marriage to be the happiest lot for most ". She herself longed for love and affection, and now came a man who might bring that into her life.

For some time Richard Monckton Milnes had been urging her to marry him, and though up to the present she had refused, he had not lost heart, and was still pressing her. She felt that she must now make a final decision one way or the other. Monckton Milnes, later Lord Houghton, was young, handsome, rich, and well born. He was a brilliant man with literary tastes, the friend of Charles Dickens, and later to be the great authority on Keats. He had a public career, too, was M.P. for Ponte-



fract, was very friendly with Lord Palmerston, and if he chose to give himself up to politics, clearly had a great career before him. He loved Florence, and she believed she could love him. "I have a passionate side to my nature, and he could satisfy that. I have an intellectual side to my nature, and he could satisfy that too."

But she had a third side to her nature, "an active side", and that she felt would not be satisfied in marriage with him. She knew that she could not find content merely in life as head of a man's house. She wanted to work, and said: "I could be happy with him if we joined in some great work, but not by spending life in arranging domestic matters." Moreover, deep down she never forgot the call which she believed God had made to her, and all her instincts told her that ordinary married life did not mean answering that call. She wrote in her diary: "I must strive after a better life for women. Can I strive after it as a married woman? Would he let me? Would he sympathize in that?" She did not really, in her heart of hearts, believe that he would. And we should perhaps note that though her parents would have welcomed the marriage, some of her best friends were against it, and did not think Monckton Milnes could satisfy the depths of her nature.

In other words, she saw that as the wife of a distinguished man she might have a happy and an interesting personal life, but that it would mean giving up any idea of a career for herself. A married woman in mid-Victorian England had as her sphere the home, and nothing beyond (though Elizabeth Fry had shown that with her husband's help she could do public work), and Florence felt to the very depths of her being that she wanted more than that. "The only way to make life real is to do something to

relieve human misery," she wrote. She had no illusions as to the greatness of the sacrifice she might make, but something within her forced her to give up her personal happiness. She decided that marriage was not for her, again saying to herself that "for some, an active career was better".

We cannot know how great she felt the sacrifice to be. She longed to be loved, and she knew that she was capable of love. She had a maternal side to her nature, which came out years later in the great affection she showed to some of her young nurses. Occasionally there are touches in her later letters which may make us suppose she did fully realize all she might have had, and had given up. Yet the fact was that the instinct within her drove her to make that hard choice, a choice which if it deprived her of personal happiness in marriage was yet to mean so much to the ultimate happiness of mankind.

To Florence herself at the time, it brought more wretchedness. Naturally her parents were terribly disappointed at her decision. She was miserable at the disappointment and vexation she caused; "persecution from those we love grinds one's very heart out," she wrote in her diary. Yet she stood firm, and we can only marvel at the rightness of that impulse which forced her to give up such hopes of personal happiness for the sake of what must have seemed almost hopeless ideals.

Though she refused Richard she missed him terribly. She confessed she "thought of him every day". Meeting him at a party she was made miserable when, though she went up to talk to him, "he would hardly speak; he did not show indifference but *avoidance* . . . he would have no familiar friendship". Monckton Milnes indeed, though he later married another woman, did love Flo profoundly,



and found her rejection so bitter he could not bear to meet her in society. She writes, too, in her diary how she dreamed one night that she saw him coming to tell her he had made all things right for her to go and take up her work as a nurse. In reality he was, of course, opposed to the scheme, and indeed it was clear that she must choose between him and the hope of a nursing career. So she made her sacrifice, and accepted the fact that it brought her into still deeper disgrace with her relations.

She tried to placate her home circle by greater efforts to adapt herself to family life. She writes: "We do the best we can to train our women to an idle, superficial life, and we hope that if they don't marry they will at least 'be quiet'. What have I done this last fortnight? Read to Papa and Mama. Learnt seven tunes by heart. Written letters. Ridden with Papa. Paid eight calls. And that is all."

Time passed, and in two years (1850) Florence reached her thirtieth birthday. So far she had accomplished nothing, and seemed as far as ever from her goal. She was inwardly as resolved as ever. "I must strive after a better lot for women," she wrote, "and must find a profession, a trade or occupation to fill and employ all my faculties." She told one friend that she now realized that nursing was what she had really wanted to do ever since her childhood, and now that she had turned her back on marriage, she was quite clear as to her intentions.

Then in 1851 a chance came. Her sister fell ill, and was ordered off to Carlsbad for a cure. Naturally, Mrs. Nightingale would go too, and it was intended that Florence should be with them. Carlsbad was a gay, luxurious spa, where smart people went, and both Parthe and her mother looked forward to an amusing time, with

plenty of friends and gaiety. Now Carlsbad lay not far beyond Kaiserwerth, and Florence seized her opportunity. She begged to be allowed not to join the other two at Carlsbad until after she had spent two weeks at Kaiserwerth. This time Mrs. Nightingale weakened, and even Parthe's sarcasm did not check Florence. She fought so desperately for this two weeks, that her mother at last gave way. Flo was to have her fortnight at the institution, but, lest the gay, aristocratic circle at Carlsbad should hear of this odd proceeding, it was to be kept quiet and secret. To this Flo agreed, and at last she entered the doors of Kaiserwerth as a "student nurse". "Now," she wrote, "I know what it is to live and love life."

Brief as those two weeks were, they were really sufficient to set her free. She did not actually learn much nursing, though Kaiserwerth had a hospital with 150 beds, as well as an orphanage and a school. There were 116 "deaconesses, blessed by the Church, but under no vows". Florence afterwards said: "The nursing was nil, the hygiene horrible." But she saw here "an active life for women", and she always reckoned it as the beginning of her training. She learnt also something of the hardships of a nurse's life. Each day the nurses got up at 5 a.m. They were allowed only ten minutes for each of the four daily meals, and those meals were very scanty. The coffee, for example, which they drank was not "real coffee", but a concoction made of beans. It has also to be noted that at Kaiserwerth none of the women nursed any male patients. All men were nursed by male nurses. This rule, while it made the Nightingales feel that Flo was not really stepping beyond the bounds of Victorian propriety, meant, of course, that even such training as she got was only in connexion with women; in that sense

it was no sort of preparation for the work in the Crimea.

At the end of the two weeks Flo joined her mother and sister at Carlsbad. Beyond Parthe's sarcasm at her peculiar ideas of enjoyment, nothing was said. The Nightingale's grand friends knew nothing of what Flo had been doing. She went home with her family, but now she had come to a definite resolution. She stayed at home for a few months, but she was absolutely determined that she would go back and obtain more thorough training. Two weeks were, of course, laughable as training; she must go back for a longer period. Somehow or other, we do not know how, she managed to induce her parents to let her go back to Kaiserwerth for six months.

Then she came to realize that even there she was not getting the experience she needed. She felt she must go to some place like an ordinary hospital.

Her family had thought actual experience of any kind of nursing in an institution would cure her of her ideals, but it did not. She determined that she would no longer stay at home. She wrote in her diary, "I shall go and look for work". She knew her youth was passed, and said she was glad, for now she could stand out better against the opposition. One of her mother's sisters, Aunt Mai, now backed her up in her wish to be allowed to spend part of each year away from home. Her father would have been willing, and was ready to give her an allowance, but Mrs. Nightingale and Parthe still objected, and said she ought not to be given any money, unless she married. Flo battled on, and now she enlisted the help of Cardinal Manning. He suggested that she should be allowed to go over to Paris, live with friends, and go daily to work in a hospital run by a Catholic sisterhood. Her mother raised one final wail: "Parthe would be in hysterics,

everyone in despair." But this time Flo, rather feebly supported by her father, was victorious. Early in 1853 she went to Paris to stay with Monsieur and Madame Mohl. She went daily to the hospital for women and children run by the Sisters of Charity. She was filled with joyful exaltation and wrote: "I stand with all the world before me where I can choose a path to make." She felt that at last she was free.

We, naturally, knowing what was to come and that the work and fame of the Crimea lay barely a year ahead, feel inclined to blame Mrs. Nightingale. We have to remember, however, that she honestly believed that Flo was taking a fatal course. She could not believe that her gently-brought-up and very highly-educated daughter could find happiness in what to her was a sordid career. To her, marriage was the only sphere for a woman. She knew Flo was attractive, she knew that Monckton Milnes still wanted to marry her. Therefore she believed that it was to Flo's best interest that she, her mother, should try to prevent her taking this mad decision. She had done all she could, but now she accepted defeat.

Flo herself felt a great crisis had been passed. In her diary, at the end of 1853, she wrote: "This year has not been wasted. . . . I have learnt to know God. . . . My life has been decided . . . it has been a baptism of fire."

## CHAPTER V

## War Comes

Yet now, with an almost ignominious irony, fate seemed to deal one more blow against her. Hardly had she settled down in Paris than she fell ill, with measles, and had a bad attack which left her very weak. She came back home to England to convalesce, and Paris had to be abandoned. But now there was no turning her away from her course. She induced her father to agree that she should have an allowance, and she meant to set up a nursing place of her own. Mr. Nightingale agreed to give her £500 a year (worth more than double what that sum represents to-day), and this was to cover her own expenses and those of a matron. At this exact moment, however, she was offered a post. A committee of charitable people were starting an "Establishment for Gentlewomen during Illness". This was chiefly meant for such people as poor governesses, who, badly paid, and often with no homes or relations, were in terrible straits if they fell ill. A house was taken in London at 1 Upper Harley Street, and Florence was asked if she would act as superintendent. Her mother felt that if Flo must nurse, at least this was a respectable form of nursing, and so at long last Florence left home to begin her career. She was thirty-three years old, and years of struggle had been needed to take her even to this small beginning.

Once she had installed herself in Harley Street she took up her work with ardour. We can hardly think that she had received much training as a nurse, and indeed



she was chiefly meant to be supervisor. But from the start she insisted on going round with the doctors when they paid their visits to the patients. In addition, when an epidemic of cholera broke out in London, she went and herself nursed in the women's ward of the Middlesex Hospital.

Moreover, one side of her work in the Harley Street home was to prove quite invaluable to her. She was responsible for the food, the heating, the ordering of medicines for the patients. This gave her an insight into the needs of special food for invalids, which was to be of the greatest importance in the hospitals of the Crimea. She also had to cope with the committee composed of "great ladies" and charitable gentlemen, the men taking it as their province to manage the finances and choose the doctors. In the tussles in which she found herself involved, Florence had need of all her tact and all her determination, and we can tell what she felt when she wrote to a friend: "From Committees and Charity, good Lord deliver us!"

One final touch is given in the broad-mindedness she showed in religious matters. The committee wanted to limit the "Establishment" to members of the Protestant Churches. Florence insisted that it should be open to all, including Catholics and Jewesses, and she won. This tolerance again was to show itself when she came to the difficult task of choosing nurses for the Crimea, since in those days religious intolerance was more bitter than seems possible to us, and it was one of Florence's great sources of strength that she had worked with, and appreciated, women of different religions, and had actually trained with both Catholic nurses and Protestant deaconesses.

Her family, who still really disapproved of her way of

life, and who thought she ought to have lived in their London house, and gone daily to her work in Harley Street from there, at least hoped that the Establishment would content her. But even within the space of one year Florence began to wish for further development. She wanted to include in this "nursing home" patients of all classes, not merely "gentlewomen", and, more important still, she wanted to train women to become nurses. The novelist, Mrs. Gaskell, visited her at this time and said: "There is such intellect as I never came in contact with before in a woman, and great beauty and holy goodness." She impressed all who met her, so much so that soon the possibility of a wider career was offered to her. At King's College Hospital some of the doctors suggested that she should be asked to be superintendent of the nurses. This was just the kind of opening for which she wished, and it seems almost incredible that at this point her mother and sister still raised objections "because of the Medical Students".

In justice to Mrs. Nightingale we have again to realize that the hospitals of those days were very different from anything we know, and that she did believe the type of woman who nursed in them was quite unsuitable for Florence to control in their relations with men. Later she admitted how wrong she had been. But the month which saw this proposal put forward, and which caused fresh arguments to break out in the Nightingale family, was August, 1854, a fateful one for England, and for Florence.

The currents which had been flowing through Florence's life now converged into the "tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune". England was now drawn into the Crimean War, and the great opportunity of Florence's life was offered to her.



The Crimean War, in spite of all the terrible suffering it entailed, has a certain romantic element. It was fought just midway in the nineteenth century and midway between the great struggle with Napoleon, ending in 1815, and the great struggle with Germany, which began in 1915. In its outward show it began with all the pomp and glamour of the old days. The troops set off to war in gay uniforms, the officers quite brilliant with scarlet or blue uniforms, gold lace, fur pelisses, and feathered hats. Banners and bands went with them. The whole nation had apparently grown tired of the long years of peace, and believed far too readily in the glories of war. A few disliked the allies by whose sides we were to fight, namely, our old enemies the French and the Turks. All, however, feared and disliked the foe, Russia. The army was dispatched in March and, as has been only too common a mistake, the nation believed that a few weeks of a summer campaign was all that lay before it. Very few indeed suspected the rapid disillusion that was to come. The unfortunate army, which set out with such enthusiasm and with such high hopes, had a terrible fate before it. Not only was it to meet with military disasters, but it was in turn to suffer from lack of military preparations, it was also to meet terrible conditions due to bitter weather, and was to be decimated by dysentery, and when the cold weather passed it was to suffer from cholera and typhus, and through all these miseries there was to be no proper attempt to nurse or care for either wounded or sick. Seldom has any army suffered so terribly, and the help and relief which came to it in the end was due to outside intervention, the result of the newspaper correspondents' dispatches and the work of Florence Nightingale.

The army was organized on the most backward lines.

Indeed, it was still run exactly on those laid down by the Duke of Wellington in the Napoleonic wars. The Duke had lived to a great old age, and his conservative mind had completely dominated the army. There had been no changes, no reforms. The Duke died only two years before the Crimea, and no one foresaw the need for new methods. Above all, no one at the moment foresaw the horrors of a winter campaign, fought in Russia. No one dreamt of the appalling sufferings which lay before the men. True, a few—mostly writers—had been attempting to show up the endless delays and incompetence which seemed to characterize all departments of government.

Dickens and Trollope as novelists had been sarcastic over both politicians and Government officials, but the depths of incapacity, to be shown alike by Cabinet, departments, and the military, remained unplumbed. So we have the dramatic knowledge that the gay army which left for the Balkans in such high spirits and complete confidence was to meet with, indeed melt away under, conditions of horror and suffering which have scarcely ever been equalled, and which might with a little care and organization have been prevented.

One little detail throws a lurid light on the typical attitude of the day. A high military official, when a suggestion was made that ambulances should be sent out for the wounded, scoffed at the mere idea. He had fought in the Peninsular War, when the wounded were thrown into carts filled with straw, and he said: "What was good enough then was good enough now." The high command, too, to the critical eye, might seem unpromising. The commander-in-chief was Lord Raglan. He was now nearly seventy years old, a veteran of the Napoleonic wars. He had fought with Wellington in the Peninsular, and

he had lost an arm at Waterloo, since when he had seen no active service. Forty years had passed since that battle, so Raglan's ideas and experience were entirely out of date. He has to bear his share of blame for the catastrophes which were to come. Yet we must do him justice. He was himself a warm-hearted and sympathetic man. He was very courageous and very unselfish. Unlike many of the high command he shared the hardships of his men, and he eventually died worn out from the campaign. He was only too anxious to relieve the horrors which overtook the army. But he was himself of a very cheerful, optimistic disposition, and this was, unluckily, reflected in his dispatches, where he always minimized difficulties and took a bright view of the future.

One little example of this may be seen in his official dispatch giving an account of the famous charge of the Light Brigade. It runs: "The order to advance was obeyed in the most spirited and gallant manner. Lord Cardigan charged with the utmost vigour, attacked a battery which was firing when the advancing squadron had passed beyond it . . . he retired after having committed much havoc upon the enemy. The loss sustained has, I duly lament, been very severe in officers, men and horses, counterbalanced by the brilliancy of the attack and the gallantry, order and discipline which distinguished it."<sup>1</sup>

We have also to remember that Raglan was acting with allies, the French and the Turks, and the French proved extremely difficult to work with. Indeed, the

<sup>1</sup> "The Charge of the Light Brigade", as made famous in Tennyson's poem, really is based on a mistaken idea of the casualties. They were *relatively* very few. Out of the 600, far the greater part returned in safety. Raglan's dispatches, when analysed, make this perfectly clear.

The mistaken idea of almost total loss is partly Tennyson's fault. But we may also note that the smoke of the Russian guns did hide the whole "Valley of Death", and no one saw what happened. The *horses* were almost all killed, but the majority of the men walked back safely. Cardigan himself was quite untouched.

failure to win prompt success, which was perfectly possible at first, was directly due to the action of the French commander.

In those days the cavalry was the especial pride of the nation. Its brilliant uniforms, the beautiful horses, the dash and glory of cavalry charges, all made it loom large in men's eyes. In the Crimea it was to be specially unfortunate. It was commanded by Lord Lucan, and under him Lord Cardigan, two brothers-in-law, who so hated each other that they were barely on speaking terms, and even their officers and men foresaw they could never work together. Their fatal hostility was actually to help to bring about the catastrophe of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, since the orders given by Lucan were too impatiently received by Cardigan to be properly understood.

The command of the Guards Division (brigade) was entrusted to Queen Victoria's cousin, the Duke of Cambridge, a young man of twenty-five with no experience whatever, and no capacity.

Another feature, which strikes us as odd to-day, was the fact that many wives were allowed to accompany their husbands to the war. The officers' ladies went out in style and lived in comfort in the Turkish capital, Constantinople, where there were plenty of gaieties. Others went to the lovely coastal towns along the Bosphorus. Many of the men's wives went, too, and the miseries they were to endure come into the story of Florence's mission.

The Crimean War is often considered as the most futile and useless of all wars, as well as one which involved the most terrible human suffering. Yet we can say that had it not been for that war, Florence Nightingale would not have achieved her great work. The rise of modern

nursing, and indirectly the foundation of the Red Cross, do derive from that war.

So in one sense we can see that the terrible sufferings of the soldiers brought in the end untold relief to all humanity.

In order to understand why the Crimea involved so much misery, and how Florence Nightingale was able to win such undying fame in the work she then began, we have to look first at the reason for that war, and the places where it was fought.

### 1. *Causes of the War.*

In the middle of the nineteenth century the Turkish Empire was clearly falling into decay. The Sultan still ruled over Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Asia Minor, and the greater part of the Balkans. Greece had won her independence, but Bulgaria and Rumania were still under Turkish misrule. Russia was specially interested in the decline of the Turks, partly because Turkey controlled both shores of the Dardanelles, and so denied Russia free access to the Mediterranean, partly because the majority of the peoples of the Balkans belonged to the Orthodox Church, of which Russia was herself the greatest member. The Czar had made his famous remark, "Turkey is the sick man of Europe", and he had proposed that Russia and Britain should seize such portions of the Ottoman Empire as they wished for. But England was afraid of Russia gaining an outlet to the Mediterranean through the Dardanelles, because she feared that would threaten her route to India. A new and most dangerous element of discord was added when Louis Napoleon, in 1851, made himself Emperor of France. He wished to please the French, and strengthen his position, by waging a successful war which



might recall to France the glories of his uncle, the great Napoleon. He wished also to strengthen his rather weak dictatorship by gaining the support of the Catholic Church. He had lost all democratic support when he ruthlessly seized and suppressed Parliamentary rule, but he hoped to compensate for this, both by winning Catholic support and by gaining glory for France.

Now before the French Revolution, France, as the great Catholic power, had been in charge of the "Holy Places" in Palestine: the grotto of the Nativity at Bethlehem, where Christ was born; and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, raised over the place where it was believed His tomb had been. Revolutionary France gave up Catholicism and religion, and even when Napoleon I had restored religion in France he was too occupied to think of this traditional "guardianship" being restored. Russia considered herself the power which "protected" Christians in the Turkish Empire, that is to say she protected the Christians of the Balkans, and she also then claimed the guardianship of the Holy Places. Napoleon III, after 1851, began to revive the French claims, and this gave the pretext for a fierce quarrel. It has been called the struggle for "a Key and a Star", meaning the Key of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Star in the grotto of Bethlehem. (The Star commemorating that which guided the Three Wise Kings.) In 1852 the Sultan, eager to win the friendship of France, gave her the keys of the church, and allowed her to put up in the grotto a silver star with the arms of France. Russia then, to counterbalance the French success, began to press her claim to "protect" the Christians of the Balkans. The Czar went further; he again began to talk of the "sickness" of Turkey and suggest partition of her empire, proposing Britain should have

Egypt and Crete; Russia, the Danubian Principalities and Serbia, and Constantinople to be a "free city". Britain refused. The Turks, thoroughly frightened, turned to France, for they knew that both Britain and France were prepared to prevent Constantinople falling into the hands of Russia. Probably had England made her attitude clear, the Czar might not have gone to war. But the English Government hesitated and wavered, and the Czar thought he had only to deal with the rotten empire of Turkey and the new ramshackle empire of France.

At first, however, war was declared only between Turkey and Russia (October, 1853), but the Russians succeeded in destroying the Turkish fleet at Sinope, and Britain, thoroughly upset by this, began to prepare for war. We can add, in further explanation, that the Czar Nicholas stood for all that was reactionary and cruel. His suppression of the Poles and his tyranny in Russia itself made him hateful to the British, and in this way war against him seemed a war against a tyrant. In March, Britain and France joined Turkey, and declared war on Russia.

## 2. *Changed Plans.*

Now we have to take special note of the place where the war began, for it had vitally important and disastrous results on Great Britain's army. The Russians opened the campaign by attacking Turkey in the Balkans. In July her troops poured down into Bulgaria, advancing inland across the mountains and along the coast of the Black Sea. The war, therefore, began in the Balkans, in what was then called "the Danubian Principalities", and it was therefore to Bulgaria that the French and British armies were first sent. In June, 1854, they reached Varna, on the



Bulgarian coast of the Black Sea. This was to be their base, and accordingly all stores and equipment which were sent out from Britain were dispatched to Varna.

Then came a decision which changed the whole course of the war, and which gave it the name by which it is known.

The Russians had been pushed back, and eventually withdrew from part of Bulgaria, and retreated northwards. A new plan was brought forward and put before the British Cabinet. To follow the Russians across the mountains and embark on an invasion from the Balkan Principalities was clearly difficult, and was likely to be a long-drawn-out affair, but just across the Black Sea, temptingly near, lay the one great southern port and arsenal of Russia, Sebastopol, built in the little peninsula called the Crimea. France and Britain had command of the sea. Why should they not make a lightning dash across the water, seize Sebastopol, and so deal an effective and deadly blow?

In August, 1854, the British Cabinet met to consider this change of plan, and to discuss the possibilities of an invasion of the Crimea.

Contemporaries wrote most bitterly of the blindness and stupidity of the Cabinet, which eventually accepted such a plan. The British commander-in-chief, Lord Raglan, away with his troops in Bulgaria, was not consulted, and he was appalled when the orders for this new campaign reached him. Russia possessed a vast army; Sebastopol was her chief arsenal and was known to be heavily armed and fortified. The autumn was now at hand, and above all, this new plan meant transporting the whole army across the Black Sea and landing, in the face of an enemy with very greatly superior forces, on a heavily

fortified coast. Yet that plan was agreed on by the British Cabinet, and a dispatch to that effect was sent to Lord Raglan. He, being under the orders of the British Government, believed that he had no possible alternative but to do as he was told. He prepared, therefore, for the invasion of the Crimea. We may notice, too, that the electric telegraph had just been invented, and the use made of it to send orders to the front was the cause of bitter complaint by the soldiers.

The peninsula of the Crimea, jutting out into the Black Sea from the southern coast of Russia, is a high, rocky country, split into deep ravines, with no good harbour except Sebastopol itself. The invaders had few places where they could land, and when they did (if they could) land on the open beaches they must make their way up to the heights surrounding the great forts of Sebastopol. They would have to take all their supplies with them, by sea, whereas Russia, of course, could get her supplies from the Crimea itself, and could also pour in munitions from the north, where the peninsula was joined to Russia proper.

Such an invasion was clearly a most dangerous and difficult attempt at any time. It was made far more dangerous by the time of year. In summer the Crimea has a most beautiful climate, and is indeed a most lovely spot.<sup>1</sup> On the coast great cliffs rise up in white walls from the sea, and inland there are deep ravines, with rushing torrents, steep hillsides covered with great forests, and high plateaux, which in the warm season are covered with sheets of flowers. Orchids, sweet peas, mignonette, and sweet william grow wild, and in the spring, crocuses, hya-

<sup>1</sup> It is now being developed by the Soviet Government as a great holiday district. Yalta, where the "Big Three" met, is close to Balaclava, and is a summer resort to-day.

cinths and snowdrops carpet the ground. In winter, however, all is very different. Fierce, bitter, icy winds sweep down from the north, snow lies deep on the high ground and fills the ravines. The whole country becomes icy and impassable. The winter weather there is especially violent, and the Black Sea, which surrounds it, takes its name from the terrible storms and inky tempests which lash it to fury.

The sole excuse for the incredible decision to invade in this hurried way was that both France and Britain believed that through surprise they could not only land their armies, but in one rapid dash could capture the great arsenal. All their calculations were based on this, and in point of fact the Russians were taken by surprise, and the Allies' armies did land in safety on the beaches. They landed on the strip of sandy beach to the north of Sebastopol, near the little River Alma. The British troops numbered 26,000, the French 30,000, while the Russian army in the Crimea was 80,000. The British landed without tents, without ambulances, and most of the military stores were in fact left behind at Varna. Yet, having achieved their object and taken the enemy by surprise, the Allies felt cheerful and confident. They advanced up the valley of the Alma, and on 30th September won a victory over the Russians. That victory, wildly acclaimed in England, plunged the Russians into confusion and despair, and had the Allies only advanced at once, their expectations would have been fulfilled and Sebastopol would have fallen. They did not, however, advance. They made a terrible and fatal mistake. They did not press on. They were within one day's march of Sebastopol itself, but they first halted for five precious days, and then, utterly astounding as it seems, they did not go forward to attack the citadel, but marched away from their position, marched

right round from the north, along the Russian flank, and began to re-establish themselves in the south, planning a fresh attack from that direction.

The reasons for this apparently mad action are various. The French and British were not acting well together. The French commander, Marshal St. Arnaud, was actually a dying man, and he wished to pause and look after his wounded. The British commander, Lord Raglan, hesitated to provoke a breach with his ally. After the first fatal delay on the Alma, the Allies urgently needed a port, since they could not operate from the open beaches. The only place to be considered as a port was Balaclava, a tiny little place, not much more than a split in the high rocky cliffs of the southern coast, and really quite unsuitable as a landing base. But there was no other port. It was therefore decided to make for Balaclava. This flank march and the delay it caused gave the Russians just what they needed, time to recover from their surprise. They used it to the full, and headed by the great German engineer, Todleben, they were able to throw up strong earthworks and defences round Sebastopol.

## CHAPTER VI

### Sufferings of an Army

October was now drawing near, and it was quite obvious that the Allies were not going to be able to storm Sebastopol, but that they were going to be forced to establish themselves in siege lines.

Now this entirely altered the campaign, and it was the

fact that the troops were, contrary to their commanders' expectations, called upon to face the severe Crimean winter, for which they were totally unprepared, that brought such dreadful results.

The army had set out for Bulgaria in summer, with summer kit, and the men were wearing linen uniforms. Supplies for the autumn were got ready, but all stores were sent to Varna, the large Bulgarian port. Now everything had to be shipped across the Black Sea, and transported to the inadequate and most unsafe little harbour at Balaclava, and from there taken eight miles up steep, rocky country to the front lines before Sebastopol. Here we come to the second disastrous feature, lack of transport. There was no metalled road from Balaclava, only a clay track. In winter this was bound to be churned up, and it was indeed to prove quite hopeless for carts or even for horses. Even that one track was by incredible stupidity left to be commanded by some Russian batteries.

Lord Raglan here again was too optimistic. He thought Sebastopol would fall before the rains came, and he therefore did not think it necessary to build a proper metalled road. And, as his dispatches show, even if he had believed it necessary, it was almost impossible for him to spare the men to make it. The English army only totalled under 30,000 men, and they had to hold a large section of the lines. The French had a bigger force and had been heavily reinforced by now, but they kept rigidly to the portion of the lines allotted to them. The Russians, of course, vastly outnumbered the Allies. Raglan therefore declared he could not spare the men from the fighting lines to build a road which he believed would never be needed. He was entirely wrong in all his expectations. Sebastopol was not captured quickly, and the Allies had



to prepare for a winter campaign. That campaign had to be fought on the bitterly cold heights of an icy country, and the troops which had to face the most severe conditions of a Russian winter were in every way absolutely unprepared. The results of those two facts were to produce conditions of horror and misery, such as are almost unequalled in modern times.

Now here we come upon one of the most interesting questions of this war. The British army had not fought in Europe for over forty years; its last campaign had been against Napoleon. Raglan himself was now an old veteran. He had fought with Wellington in the Peninsular War, and his active service went back to 1805. But though, unfortunately, the British command had not become in any way modernized, yet new inventions had brought great changes. The electric telegraph made it possible to wire dispatches, and a cable was laid from Varna across the Black Sea to Balaclava. Daily newspapers had come into being, and *The Times* was the foremost paper in England, if not in Europe. *The Times*, along with other newspapers, sent out "war correspondents" to send back accounts of the battles and campaigns to England. These men, and chief amongst them W. G. Russell, the correspondent of *The Times*, all too soon had it brought home to them what was the plight of the British army. They sent reports back, and through the power and vividness of Russell's dispatches all England soon shared that terrible knowledge. Raglan and the higher command, and to a certain extent the War Office, all thought this entirely wrong. The accounts published by the newspapers were, of course, available to all Europe, and what was published in England one day could be telegraphed by neutrals across to Russia. *The Times*





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DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR



argued that whatever was published in their columns was already perfectly well known to the Russians who, from their own positions in the Crimea, and through the many spies which they had behind the Allied lines, had more exact and earlier information than the English newspapers were likely to give.

Later, when blamed for the sufferings of the troops, Lord Raglan argued, in his own defence, that in his official dispatches he did give the War Office correct information, if they chose to interpret it. But if we read those dispatches, anyone must feel that they required more "reading between the lines" than was possible. The soldiers in the army respected and loved him, and they never complained to him. So he would note in his dispatch that "the weather is bitterly cold", but add "however a few days of sunshine have cheered us all". He would say that the difficulties of transporting supplies up from the little port to the front were very great, but add "We are all as busy as bees at Balaclava". Certainly the official military view was that the condition of the British army must be concealed from the enemy. This involved concealing it from the public at home. It was due to the different conception of duty held by Russell that the English public became aware of what was really happening to the army on the bitter heights of the Crimea.

The British and French armies, therefore, settled down, just as winter set in, to besiege Sebastopol. Their lines ran south of the great fortress from the coast on the west round towards the east. The French on the left were said to have the better and more sheltered positions. The British, on the heights to the right, were exposed to the full fury of the bitter winds. They had shallow trenches, hastily dug in the frozen ground, which they manned

during the day. These trenches, however, gave very little cover and were not meant to be lived in. The troops really lived in tents, pitched behind. No huts had been provided at all, and there were no buildings on those desolate heights.

The Russians had the shelter of Sebastopol itself, with its houses and forts. In addition, as the Allies never completely surrounded Sebastopol nor cut communications to the north, supplies could always be poured in to the Russians from the north, both food, clothing and munitions. They had good guns, and were a well-trained and formidable force. The real enemy of the British army was, however, not so much the Russians, but disease. The number of killed and wounded in action seems to us extraordinarily small, whereas the number who died from disease was incredibly large. In the whole campaign, out of the less than 30,000 who sailed from Britain, only 2700 were killed in action, whereas no less than 20,000 died of disease. The original army, therefore, was practically wiped out entirely, though reinforcements were poured out to take its place. The unhappy soldiers had taken the germs of cholera with them from the unhealthy camps of Bulgaria; in the Crimea they were to suffer in turn from frostbite, Asiatic cholera and typhus.

When the "trench warfare", as we would call it, began before Sebastopol, the sufferings of the wounded became very great, partly owing to the position of the lines, so far from the little base at Balaclava, and partly owing to the failure to make any proper provision for dealing with casualties. There were no ambulances, and so fast did the horses die that there was soon no transport. The wounded had to be carried on stretchers if they could not walk. There were at first no "base hospitals" at all. All the

wounded and sick had first to be carried down the seven or eight miles of rough track to Balaclava, and then put on board ship and transported across the Black Sea to Scutari, where the main hospitals were set up. The distance from Balaclava to those hospitals was 300 miles, and the ships took as long as six days to cover it. The mortality on these voyages, in ships quite unfit to transport wounded, was frightful. There were no trained nurses, only orderlies, who usually were very young men, without any training, allotted to this work. In addition, some of the old army pensioners had been taken out to supplement these orderlies, and they were, if possible, even more unsuitable, being so feeble with age. There were only four orderlies to every hundred wounded.

The French army was better looked after, and it had Sisters of Charity, who cared for the wounded.

But the real horror of the Crimea came from two other factors, the spread of cholera and the terrible condition of the British army. The troops had begun to suffer from cholera in the summer, during their time in Bulgaria, where the disease was always to be found. It was one of the most awful scourges of the day. Men who caught it suffered great pain, with agonizing cramp. It was a most terrible disease to nurse, one of its most awful features being the fact that the patients turned a deep purple colour. It was very deadly, and it spread very rapidly.

Perhaps we might say that, given the poor state of medical knowledge of those days, it was difficult to blame either the medical or military authorities for this plague, which was actually more deadly than the great plague of 1666, and for which no known cure existed.

But for the miserable condition of the men the authorities were definitely to blame. First of all, the troops

were quite inadequately clothed. The men had been sent off to fight a summer campaign; as a result, they were sent with no woollen underclothes. They each had only one pair of boots, and these, to give a "smart appearance", had been made too tight. The high command had been so confident that Sebastopol would fall within a few days of the landing, that the men had been told to leave even their knapsacks on the transports carrying them from Varna, and this meant they had nothing but what they stood up in. Even in small matters they started badly. Their uniform was too closely modelled on that of the Napoleonic wars. They wore tight tunics and tight trousers, and high, stiff stocks. The men complained especially of the new "shako", invented by the Prince Consort, and called by them "the Albert hat". The Prince had designed it with "a brass ornament and pretty tuft", but the men hated it as being heavy and hot. The guards and fusiliers wore "bearskins", even in August, and officers in general gave "a liberal display of gold lace and feathers". This brilliantly clad army, however, needed more solid comforts, and of them there were none. There were at first actually not even tents, and the men had to live in the open, or in shallow trenches. When at length tents were sent out, it was too late; winter had come, and the great storms soon blew the tents to tatters. When, much later, huts were sent out, it proved almost impossible to get them from the port of Balaclava to the front, so bad were the tracks and so few, by that time, the horses and carts.

Yet the men had to suffer even more, for the weather grew rapidly worse and the cold more bitter. Now a fresh misery arose. According to the rules of those days, the men were supposed to cook their own food. They



were also supposed to find their own fuel; the army did not reckon to supply that. Therefore, one of the very first necessities was some kind of firewood, and up on the heights of the Crimea there were no trees, and consequently no firewood. Men coming out of the trenches had to wander about desperately trying to find any kind of fuel before they could cook any meal. There were no regimental cookhouses, and each man had to fend for himself.

After Inkerman, in November, a truly appalling hurricane blew up. The sick and wounded had been huddled into what few tents had arrived, but the storm blew them to tatters and left the men lying exposed to torrents of freezing rain. The rations issued to them were salt pork, raw coffee beans and "biscuit", for not even bread was provided by the commissariat. So the unfortunate soldier, coming out of the trenches wet and tired, had to try to cook his salt meat and roast his coffee beans before he could have a meal. When such firewood as they could get failed, they actually were reduced to eating the salt pork raw. Even this was not always possible. As the autumn storms grew fiercer the tracks up from Balaclava became clogged with mud. No carts could get up, not even horses, and there were very few mules. Admiral Sir George Heath, who with the fleet was in comparative comfort in harbour, wrote: "The mud is so deep the poor fellows are only getting half rations. Lord Raglan takes it very coolly." But a little later Raglan himself wrote: "The less the men get, the less able they are to stand such exposure to the weather as they have lately had . . . the soldiers are so weak they can but just move their legs along and have no energy to raise their hands to their caps to salute." When at long last matters did improve,

the admiral noted that one of the first signs of returning strength was that once more the troops began to salute their officers. Lord Raglan, though he loved his troops, was really handicapped by his cheerful disposition and could not bring himself to describe their conditions. Thus, though he saw what the men suffered at the front, his dispatches too often seem to us to show a blindness which is astonishing. He would write, mildly: "The men will not die on half rations, but good rations are a preventative against sickness." Or he writes (28th November, 1856): "The weather has been very bad, and the camp and country are in consequence of the rain in a most unsatisfactory state. The men are, however, endeavouring, and with some success, to shelter themselves with stones . . . it is gratifying to me to assure you that they exhibit the same cheerfulness and the same ardour in the discharge of their duty as they have manifested throughout the operations." He also writes that "vast quantities of stores have arrived (at Balaclava), but the difficulty of disembarking them is very great, owing to the very limited extent of the harbour, its crowded state, the narrow entrance, and the fact that the rocks on the north side rise directly out of the water, there is consequently accommodation only on one side." Three weeks later he wrote: "There are severe frosts at night, but the sun shines brightly through the day, and there is now an absence of wind, which, whilst it continued, added considerably to the sufferings of the troops." He wrote to report that the longed-for huts had arrived at the base, but "their great weight,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  tons each, is a serious obstacle to their conveyance to the camp, with our limited transport. Each hut requires three wagons, with from 8 to 10 horses each, or 180 men." And this was in January, 1855, when he also

reported: "The fall of snow has been very great for the last three days and is now fully a foot deep." He afterwards said, and sincerely believed, that these dispatches should have been interpreted by the authorities at home as showing the ghastly condition of his army, and that he did not consider he could have written more clearly.

Some of the higher command did not share the hardships of the troops. Lord Raglan himself remained with the army at the front, but the commander of the Light Brigade, the rich Lord Cardigan, went down each night to sleep comfortably in his private yacht, moored in the harbour of Balaclava.

The Duke of Cambridge, Queen Victoria's young cousin, also slept on a yacht, but his unhappiness over the disasters did lead him to throw up his command, for which presumably he knew himself unfitted, and he went back to England. Cobden described this most cuttingly: "Nothing but shame and discredit attaches to us. . . . Crowds of officers, including the Duke of Cambridge and Lord Cardigan, have slunk home, boys have been left in charge of boys, for there are few grown men out there."

Moreover, bad as were the conditions at the front, the sufferings of the sick and wounded men on the ships crossing the Black Sea were unknown to the commanders, as were the frightful conditions at the hospitals at Scutari, and no reports on these matters were sent back by the authorities.

Yet, while the men were in such miserable conditions, we find, with indignation, that a number of people were able to be quite comfortable. The wives of officers, both of the army and navy, seem to have gone out to the Crimea not only to be with their husbands, but to enjoy

themselves. Sir George Heath mentions, "the English ladies at Therapia have a very snug little coterie". Amongst those who went out so gaily Russell spoke of "an Irish baronet and his daughter who have come out to visit their relative in a cavalry regiment". At Inkerman a party of young ladies went out to "see the battle" and were "dreadfully dismayed" at the sight of the wounded. Yet it is only fair to say that the officers themselves were often distraught over the sufferings of the troops; one man, Russell reported, came to him in tears, saying: "Oh! my poor men! Oh! my poor men!"

Again, the British army was always too few in number; the men had to fight and man the trenches, and could not in addition get through all the extra work that was expected of them. After Balaclava, the bodies of the dead men were buried only a few inches below the surface of the earth, and when it rained the corpses were exposed.

What maddened such men as Russell was the fact that the British were so much worse off than the French, or the Russians. The French had actually secured a less exposed part of the lines, but they also were better equipped, and in particular they had far better arrangements for cooking the men's food. As to the Russians, many of whom Russell saw as prisoners, he gives us a very interesting account. He described them as having "small round bullet heads, straight light hair, high cheek bones, keen grey eyes, square jaws, and sharp chins", and as being so much alike that he said it was "a wonderful family likeness". They were spare and strongly built and very tough, courageous fighters. As to their equipment, he commented on their "good boots, into which they tuck their loose trousers", and their greatcoats,

“better than the English. They wore pointed metal helmets ‘pickel-haube’, which gave protection to the head.” He also noted the colour of their uniform, “a drab” (that is to say a brownish grey, not unlike modern khaki), which as he noted “admirably concealed their wearers”. The British, on the other hand, were still fighting in the red coats, or bright blue, which made them very conspicuous. Thus, at Balaclava one writer described the extremely beautiful and gay appearance of the British army, drawn up before the battle, with its blocks of scarlet and blue, the officers resplendent with gold lace, the Hussars wearing their most becoming “pelisses”, or little, short coats hung from the shoulders and with the coat sleeves flying free. The British army, in fact, was dressed for show, but the dark-grey columns of the Russians for use. When the Light Brigade charged, the staff up above could see the Russian position, but to the men fighting in the valley, the smoke of the guns quite hid the grey Russian uniforms, and they were unaware of the presence of their enemy.

So obvious were the mistakes made by the military commanders, that even at the time the war correspondents wrote bitterly on the subject. Lord Raglan himself was an old man, and though he genuinely meant to do his best for his army, he apparently did not fully realize all that was going on, and was not kept informed by the medical men. As to the incompetence of the officers in general, Russell pointed out that this was largely due to the system by which a man bought his commission and paid for each step up in rank. This meant that experienced officers who had not much money would find men with no experience at all buying promotion over their heads. One famous case was the lieutenant-colonel of the 55th, who



commanded his regiment all through the frightful winter of 1854, and did very well, only to find in the spring that a captain, seven years his junior in seniority and who had only served in the home depot in England, bought the command and "took the regiment out of his hands". This system of promotion by purchase was, of course, unknown to the French, who thought the English plan quite insane. Napoleon had seen to it that promotion came by service, and in his famous phrase, "careers were opened to talent", but in the case of Britain this buying of commissions went on until Gladstone abolished it in 1870. The English system had been introduced by Charles II, and Russell bitterly commented "because Rupert's cavaliers had no great opinion of the good breeding of old Noll's Ironsides".

One little point of interest is that Russell was considered to be too fond of praising the French arrangements, as for example in the fact that their men had warm blankets and good kitchens, and this especially infuriated many of the British veteran commanders, who were so old that they still regarded the French as the enemies against whom they had fought in the Peninsula and at Waterloo.

## CHAPTER VII

### Florence goes to the Crimea

On 9th October, 1854, William Russell's famous dispatch on the condition of the sick and wounded appeared in *The Times*. He wrote: "It is with surprise and anger that the public will learn that no sufficient preparations



have been made for the care of the wounded. There are not enough surgeons, no dressers, no nurses, not enough bandages . . . the men are left to perish in agony, unheeded . . . they must die because the medical staff of the British army have forgotten that lint is necessary for the dressing of wounds." A little later came the account of the men's suffering due to the weather and the lack of all equipment for the cold. "No boots, no topcoats, even the officers in tatters, the men in rags. No medicine, no shelter. Toiling in mud and snow, exposed in open trenches to the pitiless storms of a Russian winter, the army is lost in a vast waste of sodden earth." <sup>1</sup>

As one dispatch followed the other, Britain awoke with horror to the fact that her army was wasting in agony. The War Office and Cabinet at first tried to deny the facts, and did, of course, blame *The Times* for such publications as likely to "encourage the enemy". But *The Times* stuck to its guns and continued to publish the reports. Such famous soldiers as Lord Wolseley and Sir Evelyn Wood were fighting as young men in the Crimea, and they both, in later life, said that Russell's dispatches were actually not strong enough in exposing "the cruel neglect and incapacity which wasted our armies".

In the Cabinet, the Secretary of State for War was the Duke of Newcastle, who plaintively said later that he had failed to understand from Raglan's dispatches how bad the situation was. But the Secretary of State *at War* (a post which no longer exists) was Flo's friend, Sidney Herbert. He was in theory chiefly concerned with the financial side of the war, but he was a competent and a humane man. Utterly horrified at the discovery of the

<sup>1</sup> Sir Howard Elphinstone sent his family two sketches, one of an officer in his smart uniform before Balaclava; the other of a tattered object, wrapped in a torn blanket, standing in a pool of water, a mere scarecrow representing the change.

state of affairs, he it was who saw at least one step which could be taken. The sick and wounded were receiving no skilled nursing. Well, he knew of one way and one person to remedy that. Russell had spoken of the French Sisters of Charity; he had said, "Are there no women amongst us able and willing to come? Are none of the Daughters of England, at this extreme hour of need, ready for such a work of mercy?" Sidney Herbert wrote at once to Florence Nightingale, to ask her if she would go out to the Crimea to act as Superintendent of Nursing, and his letter actually crossed one from her offering her services.

Florence, along with the rest of Britain, had read the accounts in *The Times*, and she saw at once that perhaps she could do something towards relieving the miseries of those sick and wounded men. She wrote offering to go out herself, and to pay her own expenses and that of another nurse. Another friend offered to pay for more nurses. That seemed all Florence herself at the moment could offer. Sidney Herbert's proposal opened up a much wider prospect. He asked her to go out on behalf of the Government, and she accepted at once. They met to discuss plans on 16th October. It was decided she should be "Lady Superintendent of Nurses". She should choose a band of nurses to go with her, without loss of time, and the Government would pay the cost. As a preliminary Herbert thought that £1000 would be granted towards outfits and fares. Florence—strange as it may seem—felt she must first have her parents' consent, and though apparently they would not have favoured her going independently, they at once agreed as she was asked by the Government.

We have to understand that she was officially sent only to "supervise" the nurses; strictly speaking, she had

no authority to deal with the state of the hospitals nor of the condition of the men. She was herself under the direction of the medical officers, and of course under the military authorities. Simply because she found a total breakdown in all the hospital arrangements, and indeed in all provision for the welfare of the troops, she found herself obliged to step outside her official position. To that fact we can trace both many of her difficulties and also the immense importance of the work.

Then came the great problem, what nurses could she get to go with her? The situation was desperately urgent, and she proposed to set off in a few days. *The Times* had already started its fund to provide "comforts" for the troops, and as soon as it was known Miss Nightingale was being sent out, offers of money and of help poured in. Within two days £7000 was sent to her personally.

Many women volunteered, but very few indeed seemed in the least qualified. Some wished to join her only for the sake of the pay; "money is their only object" she noted. As to trained nurses, the only people who seemed suitable were to be found amongst the religious communities, both Catholic and Anglican. Here it is difficult for us to realize the difficulty created by religious intolerance. Religious feeling ran very high in those days. The rise of the "Oxford Movement" had brought into being what we call the "High Church" party, which had recently set up sisterhoods, a few of which were nursing orders. But the fact that some of the most famous personalities of the Oxford Movement, such as Manning and Newman, had joined the Roman Catholic Church, led to a good deal of uneasiness, even suspicion. People were afraid lest "sisters" or nuns should try to convert the sick and wounded men. The other party, the "Evangelical",

was also very strong, and to it belonged many of the great philanthropists of the day, such as Lord Shaftesbury. So, strange as it perhaps seems to us, these quarrels over religion were one of the chief worries with which she had to contend. Florence, however, was firm. She herself had, both in Italy and France, learnt the value of the Catholic sisters, and she resolutely refused to allow religion to make any distinction. She chose ten Catholic sisters (five from Norwood, and five from Bermondsey), eight Anglican sisters from Devonport, six nurses from St. John's House, also Anglican, and fourteen ordinary nurses from various hospitals, making a total of thirty-eight. She had to insist that the nursing sisters must accept her authority, for at first the religious communities hesitated to accept the control of an outside lay person. We can guess a little of the difficulties of the situation, when we find that on board the ship which took the whole party to the Crimea, she had to arrange for the Catholic nuns to be in one part, the Anglicans in another, with the ordinary nurses put in between to act, as it were, as buffers.

She also knew that the doctors in the Crimean hospitals were not at all anxious for women nurses. We may excuse them by realizing that, till that date, the only women nurses whom they had experienced were the extremely rough and unsatisfactory ones to be found in the public hospitals of England. Moreover, they on the spot knew what were the conditions in the Crimea, and how totally unsuitable they seemed for "ladies" such as Florence.

Flo collected a store of things which she was sure would be needed. The military authorities, and the British Ambassador to Turkey, Sir Stratford de Redcliffe, all combined to say that nothing need be taken, everything was either present in Turkey, or would be sent

out from England at once. Sir Stratford indeed suggested that, as *The Times* fund could not possibly be needed to provide anything for the hospitals, it should be used to build an English Church at Constantinople.

Flo, however, had her own ideas as to that. She took out such things as linen, medicine, soap, arrowroot, and it was fortunate indeed that she did.

She felt that she was embarking on a great adventure. No one who had read Russell's dispatches could fail to know that she was going to a horrible state of affairs, with a whole army collapsing through disease, and with no organization on the spot to help. She was, after all, a rich Victorian woman, brought up in as sheltered a life as her parents had been able to give her. She was going to the scene of war, to a wild, desolate country, and she was going to do work which no Englishwoman had dreamt of attempting.

Her personal feelings, and her kinship with common humanity, are shown in the few cherished possessions she took with her. Despite all their differences, she loved her mother dearly, and she took with her and kept all her life her mother's parting letter, which showed that at last Mrs. Nightingale had begun to appreciate her daughter and her work. Her mother wrote: "God speed you on your errand of mercy, my dearest child. I know He will, for He has given you such loving friends, and they will always be at your side to help in all your difficulties. 'They came just when I felt you must fail for want of strength.'" How little did she understand her daughter! No one could really have believed that Flo could either "fail for want of strength", or be saved by her friends. Her long struggle had, one would have thought, taught her mother that.



As for Parthe, her attitude is even more interesting. She had opposed and thwarted Flo in every possible way. Her hostility had been one of the causes of Flo's greatest unhappiness. Now she saw her sister praised and made the centre of passionate interest by the whole of England, and for exactly the work Parthe had thought so "unwomanly"!—almost vulgar. We must be generous and say that Parthe showed no jealousy. Her opposition melted away at once in the flame of public approval. She changed her mind and became one of the warmest supporters of Flo in her new role. Indeed, Parthe made herself most useful in answering letters, collecting gifts, and dealing with the inquiries which poured in from all quarters. She benefited from the fame of her sister, and it seems to have given her real happiness to be active in doing her share. What Flo thought of this transformation we do not know, for she never referred to it.

Florence also took with her a letter from the man who loved her and wished to marry her, and who wrote praising and blessing her, but saying, rather sadly: "You can undertake what you are going to do now, when you could not undertake me."

She did not go alone with the band of nurses. Her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Bracebridge came too, one imagines rather in the role of protectors, and they were to prove amongst her most invaluable helpers. The whole country greeted the news of her departure with enthusiasm, which spread even to the French across the Channel. When she and her nurses reached France, which they were to cross by train, the rough fisherwomen of Boulogne were waiting for the boat on its arrival, and they shouldered all the luggage and carried it to the train, refusing any payment. The English press was enthusiastic in her support, and



popular imagination was roused by the idea of "a lady, graceful, rich and popular" going out to nurse the men. For it was to nurse the rank and file that Florence was going. Neither she nor her nurses were to care for the officers. They presumably were to be looked after by their servants or their relatives, and, in fact, she never dealt with any but the private soldiers.

Enthusiasm might be felt by the public and the press, but it was most certainly not felt by the military authorities. They "did not like the idea" of women nurses at all. Officers out in the Crimea were either annoyed or amused. Colonel Sterling of the Highland Division was one of these last. He made endless jokes at the idea of a woman coming out, and said that as he understood she would have to shave her head to keep out the vermin he wondered if she would "cover her bald pate with a wig or a helmet". He was quite good humoured, but thought the whole thing "an absurdity", and specially wondered if she would "scrub the floors". He would have been perhaps astounded to hear that Florence herself had foreseen that possibility, for when one ardent young woman had said "how she longed to be caring for the poor men", Flo grimly remarked, "the strongest amongst us will be wanted at the wash-tub".

The Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for War, was very dubious about the whole affair. He wrote: "The employment of women in the hospital at Scutari was not liked by the military authorities. The class of women employed as nurses (he was alluding to the ordinary nurse in the London hospitals of the day) was very much addicted to drinking, and they were even more callous to suffering in hospitals than men." He could not foresee that in Florence Nightingale he was dealing with a hitherto

unknown type of woman, nor could he believe that she could induce the nurses she took with her to follow her own example.

The chief opposition, however, did not come from the Ministry. Sidney Herbert supported her through thick and thin. Nor did it come from the fighting men. Lord Raglan, the commander-in-chief, himself supported her warmly and became her faithful friend. Her real opponents were the medical officials. Florence was quite aware of that, and even before she started she was resolved that the best way to meet that was by keeping a very strict standard of discipline, so that no complaints should be made on that score against her band. For that reason her rules were severe, and she has sometimes been blamed for the firm, stern hold she kept over the nurses.

So, with the knowledge of what she had to face, Flo began her journey to Turkey on 21st October. The voyage was hideously uncomfortable. She had to share the partitioned-off fore-cabin, and her little band was terribly crowded. The ship was dirty, cockroaches infested the place, and there was little ventilation. She herself, fortunately, was not seasick, so she was saved from one misery which afflicted the others. Only too soon she had a taste of one of the worst of her personal difficulties, the snobbishness of too many of her helpers. The nurses would not wait on each other, and it was no part of the duties of the crew of the ship to wait on them. So Flo herself set the example, and acted as waitress at table, serving nurses and ladies alike. Luckily for her, her strong sense of humour always helped her. On the uncomfortable, crowded trip, she could find amusement in the horror with which some of the nurses regarded foreign ways. One of the women from the hospitals was specially

upset, as they crossed France, by the French habit of eating meat as a separate course, and then going on to vegetables, and is recorded to have said: "I'm going to keep this here fowl on my plate until I get some of that there cauliflower with it."

What was she like, at this stage, the moment when she was really beginning her great adventure? She was now thirty-four years old. She was tall, and slim and elegant. Her brown hair was parted in the middle and drawn smoothly back. Her face was calm and serene. All her troubles had taught her great self-control, but they had also taught her reserve. So she was perhaps rather silent. She dressed very simply, in dark colours, usually black, with little white lace collar and cuffs. Her statue in Waterloo Place shows how becoming the plain, simple lines of her dress were to her. It is perhaps the most beautiful statue of a modern woman in England. In those days, of course, there was no idea of nurses wearing washable dresses, for the whole idea of infection by germs was unknown. To us, a dark woollen dress, down to the feet, and with long sleeves, seems very unsuitable for the wards of a hospital. But for those days it was practical and suitable, and when we contrast it with the elaborate frilled and lace-trimmed dresses of her portraits done a year or two before, we see that she had, in reality, put on a uniform. She could be gay with her friends, and many of her letters show a great sense of fun, but to the ordinary person her chief characteristic was her calm. She had made up her mind that in order to succeed she must never show anger or even irritation. She had some idea of the conditions she had to face; she had some glimmering of the difficult people with whom she had to deal. She realized that she had been chosen to make a great experi-

ment. Were women fit to nurse men, and were they fit to work in the hospitals of an army? It depended on her to show whether they were. She resolved that at least she would give no one cause to complain of her as unwilling to accept the rulings of the doctors under whom she was to serve. And she was helped by the fact that at long last her days of inactivity were over. She had won her heart's desire, for she was to nurse.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Horrors of the Barrack Hospital

The hospitals for the sick and wounded could not be set up near the front in the peninsula of Crimea. Difficulties of transport across the Black Sea were too great. In the Crimea itself there was no town, hardly indeed any village; the great part of the peninsula was still held by the Russians, and the area was unsafe for civilians. It was indeed quite impossible at that stage to have any sort of hospital there.

The obvious place might have seemed the great city of Constantinople, at that time the capital of the Turkish Empire. The French, however, had forestalled us there, and had taken over not only such hospitals as were available, but had also bought up all the biggest private houses.

The British troops had to take, as their hospital base, Scutari, standing on the Asiatic coast, just opposite Constantinople. One hospital already existed there, called the "General Hospital", but besides that there was a large

building, now chosen by the British as their main hospital. This was the great block of Turkish barracks standing on the cliff overlooking the Golden Horn. This was now called the "Barrack Hospital", and here Flo and her nurses landed on 4th November, 1854.

If we try to picture to ourselves the great Barrack Hospital at Scutari, as it was when Florence arrived, we have to get rid of all our modern ideas of a hospital. The place was, as its name tells, just a huge barracks, built by the Turks for Turkish troops. The floors were made of stone, broken and worn. The windows were very high up, and none of them opened. Flo once said she longed to smash the panes with her umbrella, but that meant letting in the icy winter air unchecked. There was no operating room, no kitchens, and of course no rooms for nurses.

The whole plan of the building really made it unsuitable for a hospital, besides the fact that the Turks had very primitive ideas even as to barracks, and the place was filthy beyond belief.

It was built in the shape of a great hollow square, or quadrangle; each side was a quarter of a mile long, and it was no less than five storeys high. In the middle of the square all sorts of filth and rubbish were thrown, and dirty heaps of refuse surrounded the one pump, standing in the middle, which provided water for the whole building. One day Flo noted down that she counted six dead dogs under one window, but that, at first, was not at all unusual. The pump-water came up from a well which it was suspected was foul. There was no adequate way of heating the water when it was drawn up, for so far the engineers had not put in any boilers. There was no proper heating of the "hospital" itself. There were literally miles of



corridors and wards, stone-floored. There was no ventilation. Later on it was discovered that the barracks had been built over a huge sewer, which discharged into an open pipe in the cliff below. When the wind blew strongly it blew the fumes from the sewer back, and the foul gas penetrated to the corridors and wards. As to "sanitation", at each corner of the square barracks stood towers, intended as latrines, but these were so choked up as to be unusable. As a substitute, great open tubs were stood in the wards, but the orderlies were so overworked they did not find time to empty these tubs even once in forty-eight hours. The hospital was intended to hold about 1200 men, but now (5th November) Inkerman had been fought, the cold storms of November had overwhelmed our troops, and wounded and sick were pouring across the Black Sea in hundreds. The state in which those who survived the voyage arrived was frightful. The wounded had "clothes stiff with blood", and had been practically untended for six or seven days. The cholera patients, who outnumbered them, were "black in the face", and knowing that the cramps of cholera were often followed by a state of coma, were often in agonies of fear lest they should be buried alive. These hordes of miserable men, bloodstained, covered with mud, filthy from their ghastly journey of eight or more days from the front, were arriving at this cold, dirty Barrack Hospital. There were no beds for them, no blankets, no medicines, no linen. In fact, there was not even room for them. On one day no less than 1715 sick and wounded arrived, and the very day Florence landed word came that another 500 were due.

So much for the conditions in the great hospital. As to the state of the patients, it seems to us beyond belief. Men wounded in the battles were carried eight miles



down the steep, rocky slopes to Balaclava, and then packed into the miserably few transport ships. After Inkerman the weather became bitterly cold, and besides wounds, cholera and dysentery, the troops began to suffer from frostbite. The men arrived in their blood-stiffened rags, often their flesh and their clothes frozen together. Brought in to the overcrowded hospital, the orderlies could scarcely find room to lay them in rows on the straw, which was all that could be provided. As fast as one man died, his body was hurried away, and another patient took his place. "One poor fellow," she wrote, "exhausted with hæmorrhage, dies as his leg is amputated, and almost before his breath has left his body, it is sewn up in its blanket, carried away and buried."

As the conditions at the front grew worse, the stream of patients increased. A week or two after her arrival the hospital, intended to hold 1700, had to receive 4000. The mortality was appalling. Numbers died during the crossing of the Black Sea. No adequate figures were kept, but of those who reached the hospital at least 41·5 per cent died. Actually one almost wonders that any of those from the lines before Sebastopol ever reached Scutari.

Russell, *The Times* correspondent, in January, wrote one of his most famous dispatches, describing the wounded from Sebastopol setting out for the journey (and this, it should be realized, full three months after the first dispatches had begun to enlighten the public at home):

"They formed one of the most ghastly processions that ever poet imagined . . . with closed eyes, sometimes with jaws hanging open, with ghastly faces they were borne along, two by two, the thin stream of breath visible in the frosty air alone showing they were still alive."

Yet these miserable wrecks had to be carried for eight

miles across the icy country of the Crimea, down to the tiny port of Balaklava, and had then to face a three-day crossing of the Black Sea. Flo wrote in the same month: "The frostbitten men exceeded in misery anything we have seen." We must notice that one plea is sometimes put forward to help to account for the complete lack of equipment. On 14th November, there was a great tempest, and many of the English ships anchored at Balaklava sank, amongst them one *The Prince*, laden with hospital stores. But in the first place those stores were sent out after *The Times* dispatches had shown the state of the men. Secondly, November was already well on in winter, and the stores should have been in readiness long before, and, finally, no one ship could have contained enough supplies to remedy the awful state of affairs at Scutari. The loss of *The Prince* was used as an effort to excuse, but it is not an excuse which can be accepted.

Such was the state of affairs which met Florence. She showed no dismay; she did not lose her head; she wasted no time. There was the hospital, there were the men; she set to work instantly to do the best she could with the miserable resources she had at her disposal. She gave not the slightest sign of panic or horror at the superhuman task before her. The men must be cared for, that was her only thought.

Her companions were almost in despair. Mrs. Bracebridge wrote: "We asked ourselves if it was not a horrible dream, and when we woke in the morning, our hearts sank at the thought of the woe we must witness." The outstanding achievement of Florence was that her heart did *not* sink. She calmly set to work at once.

She hastily established herself in one of the corner towers. So cramped were they for space that she and

Mrs. Bracebridge had to share a small bedroom, and she had only a small room as "office", where, besides the deal table at which she worked, there had to be piled in stores, boxes, parcels of all sorts.

The first obvious crying necessity was somehow and somewhere to find room for the hordes of sick and wounded. The "wards" had divans (built for the Turkish soldiers to sit on), stuffed with straw, running round them. These were all full. The newcomers had to be laid in the long corridors, which actually totalled four miles in their entirety. There were no beds, there were not even mattresses. At first the men had to be laid on loose straw. She instantly set her nurses to work to stuff sacks, that was the best they could achieve, and these straw-filled sacks were laid along the corridors as fast as they were completed. Later she got workmen to make "trestles", or wooden frames, for as wards and corridors alike were paved with broken stone, the cold was bitter, and she was anxious at all costs to get the "sacks" raised off these floors.

As to that first night Flo wrote: "Between one o'clock and nine we had mattresses stuffed and laid, though only, alas! upon matting. We had the men all washed and their wounds dressed." And we have to remember here that Florence had never nursed men before; she had gained all her experience in nursing women and children.

She also wrote that the Black Sea crossing was very rough, "the men arrived in a state of agony. Twenty-four of the wounded died on landing, and of the dysentery cases, 50 per cent died almost at once."

Next came bedding. From the stores she had brought she provided blankets, sheets and pillows. The surgeons were at first so hostile they would not issue orders for

linen to be drawn from her stores. Many people in England had sent her bed-linen before she started, amongst them Queen Victoria herself, who sent from Buckingham Palace sheets marked with the royal cypher. There were a few sheets in the hospital, but they were of canvas, and so coarse that as she said, "men in such emaciation could not be laid on them". There was no clean personal linen for the men at all. She herself distributed clean shirts—50,000 in all—from her store. She got canvas screens made to give privacy to the dying, and to the worst cases.

Her stores, naturally enough, were not sufficient for such an emergency. Her blankets were not enough to give one to each man. Soon even the corpses of those who died could not be buried sewn up in a blanket, the need of the living was too great. We are told that the men themselves minded most bitterly the burying of the poor bodies of their comrades without any covering, but Flo had to harden her heart to their remonstrances. There were no pillows; the army did not provide such things, and, after her own supplies were used up, it was some time before she could get any made.

With so many and such essential things to be done, we must realize what Flo must have felt towards the "ladies" in Constantinople, who might have done something, but did nothing. Later on, the wife of the ambassador, who of course had been in Constantinople since long before the outbreak of war, came across to inquire after Miss Nightingale (who was the friend of Cabinet Ministers), and was pounced on by one of the sisters and forced to enter the hospital. Much horrified at what she saw (and she never saw the worst), she retreated, and never came again, limiting her help to the sending of money.

As to cleaning either wounds or washing of linen, matters were desperate. There was only that one small fountain of water in the middle of the barrack square. Such washing as was attempted had to be done in cold water. And, as she wrote, "there is not a basin, nor a towel, nor a bit of soap, nor a broom". One of her very first demands was for "300 scrubbing brushes".

She had to contend against vermin of all sorts, one of the worst plagues being the rats, which came up from the sewers beneath. Victorian women were always supposed to scream at the sight of a mouse. Florence and her nurses had to contend with rats which ate even the nurses' dresses, and scampered over the beds of the patients. She got these pests destroyed, and even on one occasion used her umbrella to kill one which she found in her own room. Bugs, lice, maggots, all infested the miserable men and swarmed in the "hospital". The walls of the building were so thick with dirt and so infested with bugs it seemed almost hopeless to try to clean them.

The next worst evil was the cold. True the windows did not open, so no draughts came from them, but we can imagine the atmosphere of those crowded wards, with the hundreds upon hundreds of patients, all dirty, wounded, and suffering from dysentery and cholera. The wards were heated by charcoal braziers, but the mile-long corridors, which now had to be used for the patients, had no heating at all, and all this, we must remember, in bitter November weather in a very cold climate.

As soon as she could get workmen Flo had wooden partitions put up, to break the draughts, and she also got braziers for the corridors.

Once the place was cleaned and warmed, she dealt with the next most pressing problem, that of food. The men's



food was given out by the authorities on the following scale: *Full diet*, which consisted of 1 lb. of meat, 1 lb. of bread, 1 lb. of potatoes, 2 pints of tea, without milk; next *half diet*, for those too weak and ill for "full diet", which was simply half the amounts of the same items; and, finally, *low diet*, which was a quarter of the same items. For the most seriously ill there was a "spoon diet", which was just 1 lb. of bread and 2 pints of tea. There were no green vegetables, and in practice, no milk, for the Turks of Asia Minor did not keep cows. "Extras" were in fact unobtainable, though in theory the doctors could order fowls and eggs. Each "diet roll" had to be written out by a sergeant or corporal, signed by an assistant surgeon, and countersigned by a staff surgeon, and with the terrible pressure of work, this process involved immense delays, for the surgeons simply could not spare the time to sign the forms. Later, when Flo visited the French hospitals, one of the things which struck her most was the admirable French method of arranging diet sheets for each patient. So the thing could be properly done; the British authorities had merely not attempted to do it.

As to the cooking arrangements to provide the diets when ordered, they were hopeless. All the cooking was done in thirteen coppers, at one end of the building, and with the vast length of the corridors and the five storeys in height, it took more than four hours to serve one meal. Dinners, which were due at 12 noon, were not served sometimes till 6 p.m. At the worst of the rush things were so bad that orderlies actually cut up carcasses of sheep at the end of the corridors where the wounded lay. Normally all the meat was boiled in the coppers, tied up in anything which came to hand, and the vegetables thrown in with it. Sometimes it was boiled to rags, some-



times it was practically raw. Then the great bundles were ladled out and handed to the orderlies, who carried them to the wards. There they would dump them down on a bed, and try to cut them up into portions. By the time these unappetizing lumps reached the patients they were often so congealed that even fairly convalescent men could not swallow them. Nor had the men bowls, plates, knives or forks; they had to use their fingers. Flo had not foreseen anything as bad as this, and at first her nurses had to use whatever they could lay their hands on. We are told that one ward had as its only utensil "a little green bucket", and this was used for everything in turn, "soup, meat, arrowroot, negus, tea and water"; the men passed it from hand to hand, and complete despair set in on one occasion when it disappeared. When once she had arranged for the setting up of her diet kitchens she had the food properly cooked, and she issued arrowroot and gruel for those who needed it. The "milk", when sent in by the Turks, was either chalk mixed with water, or dirty goats and asses milk mixed. It would not even boil. This is the reason why we find her incessantly ordering "gruel" or arrowroot for the men.

One of the worst features was the difficulty of giving the men something to drink. The water was too foul and unwholesome to be used without being boiled, and there were no facilities for that. The fever and cholera patients craved for water or lemonade. Florence and her nurses at first set up stoves in the wards to boil the water, but the inspector-general, Dr. Cumming, forbade this, as "no cooking" was the rule for the wards. So the poor men would say, "Give us a drink for the love of God!" and there was nothing to give them. When Florence wanted to give beef-tea this was forbidden as not being "requisi-

tioned ". To meet this emergency, she issued her nurses with little " Etna's ", or spirit stoves, as extras, so as to evade the prohibition on " cooking " in the wards, and in this way the men could be given hot drinks, tea, or boiled water and lemonade. When the worst was past, she records how the men used to love to watch these little stoves being used, and would say: " Ain't that a little beauty now? I wish we'd had them in the trenches!"

She notes that the lice " were past conception; they swarmed in the men's clothes, and their beds, and in every room. If these vermin only had unity of purpose they could carry off the four miles of beds on their backs, and march with them to the War Office." Gradually by greater cleanliness and by the use of hot water and soap, she got this plague abated. She gave out handkerchiefs, brushes and combs from her stores, and in this way helped the men not only to cleanliness but to comfort and the revival of spirits which came from greater decency. One observer said: " She has a gentle voice, and if any says, ' It can't be done,' she replies, ' It *must* be done!' and it is."

At first, when the hospital was overwhelmed with the wounded pouring in after Inkerman, operations had to be performed in the wards. She got screens brought in, " for," she wrote, " when one poor fellow sees his comrade die under the knife, it diminishes his own chance ". Later, she saw to it that separate operating rooms were set up. When she first arrived, she noted there was not even an operating table, and that, too, she supplied herself.

She could not, for some time, get the latrines in the towers cleaned, and Mr. Bracebridge gives a truly awful description of the state of the wards near those towers, where the doors actually opened into the wards. But she

did resolve to have the open tubs which stood in the wards emptied. The orderlies had been unable, or unwilling, to do this often enough. Yet here, the very peculiarity of her position helped her. She was, after all, what the people of those days called "a real lady", and the men agreed that "to oblige a lady" they would empty the tubs. She left nothing to chance, and three or four times each day she would visit the wards herself and personally see the task done.

Finally, there was the question of washing the linen. Before she arrived, the laundry work was supposed to be done through a Turkish contractor. As a result it was not done at all. We are told that up to November, only seven shirts in the whole hospital had been washed. Towels and pocket handkerchiefs were considered "unnecessary extras", and the men minded most terribly the dirty habits this involved. One of Flo's most successful efforts, as we shall see, was the setting up of a laundry.

Within ten days of her arrival the changes Florence had managed to effect were marvellous. She had improved the kitchen department. First she got two new kitchens built nearer the wards. Then she had boilers put in, on each landing, to make arrowroot, specially needed for the dysentery cases. She had the meat properly cut up. The potatoes were now cooked separately. The inspector-general had said if the bones were to be removed "it would need a new regulation". Florence, however, required no regulation; she simply saw that it was done by the kitchen staff before cooking, so that no longer did one man get nothing but bone or gristle for his portion. In all this she had the practical advice of the chef of the Reform Club (Alexis Soyer) in London, who had left his post and volunteered to come out and help.

Having got the food better cooked, she next tried to have it better served. We can imagine what the meals were like, carried from the distant kitchen along the miles of corridors, and up the five storeys of the barracks. She had brought out "hot-plates", and now she arranged for the food to be put on these hot-plates, given to orderlies, who carried them to the wards, and there the medical officers told it off to each bed, so that each patient got his proper diet. As she had brought out arrowroot, &c., she could now provide proper "special" diets for each case. Within a month the hospital was transformed.

So far we have seen her as a woman toiling to obtain the first elementary things for wounded and ill: beds to lie on, clean linen, clean rooms, decent food. The details we have considered show how appalling were the conditions, and make us see what energy and what personality she had to bring order and cleanliness out of such filth and chaos. She came to it all unprepared; nothing in her life till that day could have given her any experience of such a hell on earth. Sheer force of character, competence, and courage to face such an ordeal carried her through, and for that alone she deserves all honour. But there was far more than that in Florence Nightingale.



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"THE LADY OF THE LAMP"

From the Statue by Arthur G. Walker in Waterloo Place, London





## CHAPTER IX

## The "Lady of the Lamp"

Perhaps there has been of late years a tendency to stress this strong side of her personality too much. To cleanse the great Barrack Hospital meant the waging of a great struggle, and did indeed show immense strength of character. Yet it was not that which won her the fame she earned. The men who suffered in the Crimea did not think of her as a great organizer or administrator, they thought of her quite simply, as the woman who came to save them, and to them she was indeed the "Lady of the Lamp". That legend is based on truth and reality, and it needs to be given its due importance. She might be as firm as iron in battling with officials, whether army or medical, but to the sick and wounded men she was quite different. To them she was a woman full of gentleness and sympathy, and to whom they looked for everything that relieved their suffering. One officer wrote home: "I much admired Miss Nightingale's manner to the men, it was so tender and kind."

She toiled all day in the hospital, often she was known to stand for eight hours a day, "dressing wounds". Once she was on her feet for twenty hours without a break. She showed not the slightest fear of infection, and would spend hours with the men dying of cholera. "The more awful the case, the more certainly might her slight form be seen, bending over the man, helping him by every means in her power." She never despaired. Once when five men were given up by the doctors as hopeless, she took another

nurse, cared for them all through the night, and when morning came, the doctors could say that the crisis was safely passed, the men were saved. She specially tried to go to dying men, to sit by them, and help them to the last. Nurses were not allowed in the wards; the men had to be looked after by the men orderlies. (The reason was partly that the whole place was so frightfully overcrowded there was nowhere for women nurses to sit.) This rule, however, did not apply to Flo, as the "Superintendent of Nurses". So when the long day's work was done, and when the other women had gone away to their own overcrowded quarters, Florence would set out on her rounds. As night fell she would take her little lamp, and pass along through those miles of corridors, lit only by the dim flicker of candles, stuck here and there in bottles. The beds were only eighteen inches apart, in the corridors there was barely room for her to pass between the packed rows. One of her companions wrote: "As we slowly passed along, the silence was profound. Very seldom did a moan or cry meet our ears. A dim light burned here and there. She carried her lamp, which she would set down before she bent over any patient." She herself said: "As I went my night rounds, among the newly wounded, there was not one murmur, not one groan. Once I heard a man say to his neighbour, 'I have been dreaming of my friends at home.' These poor fellows bear pain and mutilation with an unshrinking heroism which is really super-human." Her sympathy with the men, and her indignation at their preventable sufferings are expressed when she writes: "For the fevered lips there were no cooling drinks, for the sinking frames no strengthening food, for the sore limbs no pillows, but never did we hear a murmur pass those lips." Or again: "Tears come to my eyes as I

think of the dignity, gentleness, and chivalry of the men, shining in the midst of the lowest sinks of human misery." We know from the many touching letters written by those who survived the ordeal of Scutari, what she seemed like to the men. To them she was the one person who had sacrificed so much comfort, wealth, and ease, to come to their rescue. She was to them "a lady" who had come from another world to the hell in which they lay. Her graceful figure, her serene face, above all, her beautiful soft voice, came to their miserable bedsides to comfort and to help. No wonder they worshipped her.

On those rounds she wore her plain dark dress, and she tied a little white muslin cap over her hair. Later, Queen Victoria, who always wholeheartedly supported her in her mission, commented on "her great gentleness and simplicity of manner". That gentleness struck all who saw her, and we can only imagine what the sight of her must have been to the men in that filthy, bloodstained place as they saw her quiet form moving slowly along. She could not speak to all, she could only go to those whose state was the worst.

To those tortured human beings she came to stand for the help and comfort which had been denied them by others. Russell praised her when he wrote, "the loving heart of a woman saved what man had left to die". Longfellow in his famous poem describes how

Lo in that hour of misery  
A lady with a lamp I see  
Pass through the glimmering gloom  
And flit from room to room.  
The speechless sufferer turns to kiss  
Her shadow as it falls  
Upon the darkening walls.

What he wrote in verse was the literal truth. One of the men wrote to his home a letter which Sidney Herbert later read to a great meeting—and the simple words of the soldier are more effective in their truth than those of the poet:

“She could not speak to us all, you know. She would nod and smile as she went along. We lay there in hundreds, and we could kiss her shadow as it fell, and lay our heads on the pillow again, content.”

Few women have done more for suffering humanity, but few have had so great a reward. There was nothing she could not do for these men. Many were terribly mutilated, and limbs had to be amputated. In those days there were no anæsthetics, all operations had to be performed without such merciful aid. Men dreaded above all the ghastly ordeal of operations, and the bloodstained room where they took place filled all with horror. But Flo did not shrink even from that. In a famous passage, Kinglake, the historian of the Crimea, describes how “She would herself go to the terrible operating room, and men who saw her there, standing with her hands folded, found courage to go through their terrible ordeal”.

Again and again we find universal testimony to her perfect manner towards the men, and their response. One man reported: “Every poor fellow’s face softens at the sight of her.” Another: “She was wonderful at cheering up anyone who was a bit low. She was always full of fun.” Another: “If the men were told she had gone up to Heaven, they would not be in the least surprised.” And one very simple fellow said: “If Queen Victoria should die they ought to make *her* Queen.”

Besides all she did for them in their pain, she also helped them in their recovery. She used to write herself

to their parents and relations, and she answered every letter written to her by the men's own families in England. Often poor mothers wrote begging her to look after their sons; one who did not know quite how Flo would find her son wrote: "You will know him, for he is a straight, nice clean-looking boy." They would begin their letters, "Dear Friend", and she took endless pains to trace out the men and give the messages.

Most of the troops were young, far the greater number being less than twenty-four years old. Yet so great had been their sufferings in the icy heights of the Crimea that they looked years older. The nurses were often surprised to find their real age, and Florence recorded one conversation: "Are you only twenty?" "Yes, but you see we had a hard time of it up there; I've gone through a power of hardship at the front." Another nurse described how Florence would "write letters home for them, sitting on their beds, for there were no other seats of any kind". She would ask them, "What shall I say?" and the men would often reply: "Oh, you know how to make up a letter better than I do, miss." Once a wife at home wrote to say how she longed to come out and nurse her "poor lad", but the man said: "A pretty place for a woman! Better at home. You write and tell her once and for all it's impossible!"

Florence gave one odd little picture of two Russian prisoners, who had been brought in desperately wounded, and nursed back to health. "A great many of the men used to come and see them, of course none of us knew a word of Russian, but they were quite the lions of the hospital."

Her efforts, however, did not stop at caring for the sick and wounded men. She soon found that at Scutari there was another set of people desperately needing help.



In her inspection of the " great Barrack " on arrival, she went down to a basement, and there, to her horror, found a damp, filthy cellar crowded with women, most of them ill, some of them nearing childbirth. They had no beds, no furniture, nothing to keep them clean, and no one apparently was in the least concerned with them. These women were the wives of soldiers, who had been allowed to follow their husbands to the Crimea. No quarters had been set aside for them, no provision made, so those who fell ill were just crammed into this empty basement. Florence set to work at once. First she got hold of a Lady Alicia Blackwood, who had enthusiastically come to offer to help in " any task " Flo liked to give her. When shown the cellar and its inhabitants, Lady Alicia was so horrified she flung herself wholeheartedly into the effort to help these poor women. She got the place cleaned, furniture brought in, and enlisted helpers to nurse. But Flo was determined that more than this must be done. The cellars were quite unfit for human habitation. So, with her untiring energy, she appealed to the wife of the ambassador at Constantinople, and through her a large building was rented. The wives were installed there, and given food and lodging. Florence also saw how they could be enabled to help the men. She got engineers to put in boilers, laundries were set up, and the wives were employed in the much-needed work of washing the linen for the hospital. She saw, too, that something was done for the babies, and for the women who were expecting babies. Some of the ladies of Constantinople were induced to take this in hand, and a " maternity home " was hurriedly organized, and there, during December, twenty-two babies were born in decent surroundings. This was only one month after Florence had taken up her post.



She was specially concerned that the poor men who had died in their hundreds at Scutari should have some memorial, and that their bodies should rest in peace and beauty. So she arranged that a lovely piece of ground on the cliff-top, overlooking the sea, should be bought and made into a war graveyard. There a tall monument was put up, and there to this day it stands to witness both to the tragic suffering of the men and to commemorate the woman who was determined they should not have suffered in vain.

## CHAPTER X

### Her Difficulties

After the first shock had passed, and when the first and most urgent reforms had been made, Florence could draw breath. Too soon she found herself obliged to deal with other difficulties all the more aggravating because they were due to the personalities of her helpers, and must have been to her a painful contrast with the uncomplaining heroism of the men.

As far as Florence herself was concerned, she had little comfort. With such frightful overcrowding in the hospital, clearly very little space could be given up to the nurses and their superintendent. She had arrived in the afternoon of 4th November, and found she and her whole band were allotted four rooms and one tiny storeroom; not much accommodation for thirty-eight nurses, the two Bracebridges, and Flo herself! She made no fuss, simply allotted the space as best she could. But owing to the

disputes and difficulties between her "helpers" she had to divide them up. So she put the fourteen ordinary nurses into one room (it was too small, but there was no alternative), and the nuns into another. She drew a line down the middle of that room, marking one side "black" for the Anglican sisters, who wore black robes, and the other "white", for the Catholic nuns, who wore white. The nursing sisters from the Protestant sisterhood she had to crowd into a little room whose occupant, a Russian general, and a prisoner of war, had just died, and "his white hairs might still be found on the unswept floor". There remained one small corner room, with a tiny storeroom off it. The corner room was made "the office", and there Mr. Bracebridge had to sleep, on a sofa. Mrs. Bracebridge and Florence shared the tiny storeroom. In these crowded little rooms she had to work, eat and sleep. She never had a moment to herself; she never had any privacy at all. Yet we never find her uttering one word of complaint. Her discomfort simply did not count compared with the miseries and suffering she saw around.

The first pressing need, as Florence saw, was to remedy as far as possible the frightful state which she found at Scutari. Once the first month had gone, she had brought about wonderful improvements. Her really deep and tender humanity had showed itself in her dealings with the men. But she was determined to do more; she intended in fact to put an end to the muddle and incompetence which had produced such a dreadful state of affairs.

First and foremost she realized that the overcrowding must cease. There were two very large wards which, being in very bad repair, had been declared by the authorities to be "uninhabitable". Flo decided they must be made available. So she engaged Turkish workmen and

she paid them herself. When these workmen struck for higher pay she dismissed them calmly and found others. Altogether she got 800 men to work, and she got the wards put in order. Colonel Sterling, who stuck to his objection to the presence of such a woman, tartly wrote: "Miss Nightingale draws a cheque herself! Is this the way to manage the finances of a great nation?" Flo of course thought that the management of the hospital was not exactly an advertisement of the way to manage anything to do with a great nation. Quite unruffled by criticism she went her way. The fact that the windows in the hospital could not be made to open, meant that there was no ventilation, so on her own initiative she had holes bored in the wooden ceilings and partitions, thus letting a little air circulate. Next she tackled the engineers, and had boilers installed and a better water supply. The men and the wards could now be kept clean. We may reflect in wonder that after all Florence was sent out as superintendent of *nursing*, and she was, according to Victorian ideas, to be concerned with caring for the wounded; there were plenty of men in authority—doctors, administrators, and so on—yet it was left to her to deal with such technical matters as boilers and drainage.

She worked incredibly hard. Besides her routine in wards and operating room, besides the hours she gave up out of her night's rest to visit the patients, she had endless office work to get through. Stores had to be given out, letters written, contributions acknowledged. Mr. and Mrs. Bracebridge helped her enormously, but even so, the amount she did was incredible. She was the centre of it all, and she was the driving force. Without her, nothing would have been done. So she devoted her whole strength to this superhuman effort. She was to pay dearly in the

end, but at the moment she seemed incredibly strong. How she achieved so much, in such conditions, must be a cause of wonder, but we know that she was driven on by the depth and fierceness of her inmost feeling. She could not rest until she had done all that was possible for the men. Pity overwhelmed her, pity for these wretched men and for their terrible condition. She had arrived just when the stream of wounded from the battles of Balaklava and Inkerman was beginning. She saw too clearly that for most of those men she had come too late, they could not be saved. Before the close of the campaign, of an army which originally numbered 30,000 men, no less than 20,000 were dead, mostly from sickness. The figures speak for themselves.

She did what she could for the doomed men arriving at Scutari in those early days, but she saw clearly that this terrible death-roll could be reduced only if immense reforms were brought about. It was not even enough to get the hospital clean, to get fresh wards in use, to get some sort of ventilation and warmth. She must somehow change the whole state of affairs, and to this end she used all the force of her character, all her resolution, and all her patience. She had noted for herself how the lack of transport from the front had been one of the worst evils, and wrote: "Had there been anyone to draw the novel inference that after autumn comes winter, that roads would be needed to bring the sick from camp, this gigantic calamity would never have been reached."

The horrible state of affairs seems to us to have been so obvious, that one might have expected everyone on the spot would have combined to help Florence in her efforts to improve matters.

On the contrary, her chief difficulty lay in the per-

verse and obstinate opposition with which she was faced by the officials. We shall find, too, that the nurses themselves were to cause her trouble.

The actual fighting men did not, at this stage, enter into the picture. They were away across the Black Sea, on the Crimean Peninsula. But at Scutari she had to cope with the medical authorities, above all, with the "purveyors", or people responsible for issuing the supplies.

Take first the medical men. The chief obstructor was the medical-inspector in the Crimea, Dr. John Hall. He, perhaps naturally, objected to this woman coming in from outside, and he quite definitely did all he could to thwart her. Here Florence gained immensely from her social position in England. She could—and did—write direct to Sidney Herbert, in the Cabinet. She won the personal friendship and support of Lord Raglan, the commander-in-chief, who realized what she was trying to do for the men. She also knew she had the warmest backing in England, and she had the support of the Queen. Queen Victoria, who had the welfare of what she called "my soldiers" at heart, from the outset had been keenly interested in Florence's mission. As time went on, she evidently realized Flo's great ability, and the obstructiveness of the home government, for we find her writing: "Such a clear brain! I wish we had her at the War Office." The Queen indeed minded as deeply as anyone the accounts of the sufferings of "my poor men". She wrote to Mrs. Sidney Herbert: "I should like to see the accounts received from Miss Nightingale, as otherwise I hear no details of the wounded." She stated publicly: "Day and night the Queen thinks of her beloved troops," and the poor men in hospital, hearing



of this, said: "To think of her thinking of us," and one man added: "I only wish I could go and fight for her again." She subscribed to the fund raised by *The Times*, and regularly dispatched "comforts" from Buckingham Palace.

Florence was also immensely helped by public opinion. In England the increasing anger over the fate of the army which had sailed away so gaily, and which was now rotting to death, showed itself when Roebuck, a member of the House of Commons, moved a resolution that a committee be appointed to inquire into the matter. This brought down the Government, which the nation felt was responsible for the mismanagement of the campaign. Lord Aberdeen, the Prime Minister, resigned, but he was given the Order of the Garter to soften his fate. The Secretary for War, the Duke of Newcastle, also gave up his office. Palmerston, the man whom everyone knew to be full of vigour and force, became Prime Minister, and Lord Panmure, Secretary for War. Panmure also had plenty of energy and go, though his obstinacy and blundering way of going to work caused Florence to nickname him "the Bison". Sidney Herbert, after a little hesitation, took office in the new ministry again as Secretary *at War*. For a short time Gladstone was in the ministry, and also Cardwell, who was later to reform the whole army system and do away with the buying of commissions. With this new team there was clearly hope for reform. Everyone at the time realized how inefficiency in government departments lay at the root of all the trouble.

Dickens, who in his novels had held up to scorn and ridicule the delays of the civil service in his *Circumlocution Office*, wrote bitterly of the country "plunged in deep



disgrace and distress", and of the men "whose wrongs and sufferings are obscured by cannon smoke and blood-mists". Cobden said the condition of the hospital, "the lazaret-house" at Sebastopol, was "unutterably shocking", and another writer, Layard the explorer, commented bitterly: "What can be expected of a government so conscienceless as to go on vacation for eight weeks without once summoning a Cabinet meeting." Nor did Dickens see much hope in the change of ministers. In one of his sketches he wrote: "Parmastoon has newly succeeded Abbadeen (or Addled), who for his misdeeds has been strangled with a garter."

However, the new government did decide to send out a commission of inquiry, and this was headed by Dr. Sutherland, who warmly appreciated Florence's work. Indeed, his coming was one of the happiest things for her, since he became her close friend, and was to prove absolutely invaluable in the work she did in her later years.

Still, Florence was both too loyal and too sensible to oppose the medical chiefs in the Crimea openly. She had some appreciation of their point of view, and she always insisted that the orders of the medical men must be strictly obeyed. As to the junior medical officers, while she realized the appalling work with which they were faced, her natural indignation at the way some of them behaved found vent in her private comments. She wrote to a friend: "As to the medical heads here, two are brutes and four are angels; as to the assistants they are all cubs and will lament the annoyance of being called from their dinners by such an influx of wounded . . . but unlicked cubs grow up into good old bears, tho' I don't know how." Her chief opponent was the great Dr. Hall.

He refused really to admit that much was wrong, still less that it was his fault, and he violently resented the criticism and publicity showered on the medical service. He wrote: "There is a system of detraction against our establishments kept up by interested parties under the garb of philanthropy." He really believed that Florence was an interfering woman trying with her friends to win renown for herself, "and trying to make the world believe that all the ameliorations in our institutions are entirely owing to their exertions or those of a few nurses". He was never won over, and never apparently at any time had any regard for Florence or belief that she had helped the men. Yet the bulk of the medical officers did support her, and appreciate her efforts. She herself felt in one way it was a case of "give as good as you get". She wrote later: "I have been shut out of the hospitals, obliged to stand outside the door in the snow until night, I have been refused rations for two days at a time for the nurses. And then I have been as good friends the day after with the officials who did these things and have ignored it all, for the sake of the work." In this way she illustrates both her great self-control and also the fact that she was not small-minded.

Perhaps an even harder struggle was the one Flo had to wage over supplies. The lack of everything the men needed had been one of the worst things in the hospital. The public at home were rightly furious, because the official figures gave ample supplies of all sorts of stores. The return of quarter-master-general's stores sent out between 21st November, 1854, and March, 1855, included: "Flannel shirts, 140,000; flannel drawers, 108,000; stockings, 163,000; blankets, 75,000; gloves, 149,000; tweed coats, 32,000; sheepskin coats, 25,000;

rugs, 29,000; and so on." Yet, though stores were sent, and continued to be sent, they did not reach the men. It was over this that Flo waged some of her greatest battles.

The official responsible for the issue of stores was the Purveyor, and he was the man with whom Florence had to cope. It is true that here again she recognized the maddening delays which a bad system involved. Every item issued had to be first passed by a Board of Survey, and the Board, far from meeting every day, sometimes did not meet for a couple of days or longer, and not even the Purveyor could issue anything on his own authority. The destitute state of the troops was again due to a series of muddles. Many of the stores had originally been sent off in June to Varna, on the Bulgarian coast, and the change in the plan of campaign meant transshipping everything, at a time when all transport was short. Again, the stores had been wrongly packed in England, so that urgent medical necessities were stored away in the ship beneath the munitions. When the plan of campaign was changed and the landing was made in the Crimea, it meant that all munitions had to go direct to the Crimea, and this involved long delays before they could be brought back again to Scutari. Even then there were mistakes, so that sometimes the things she needed were sent back again, piled below fresh stores of munitions, to Balaclava. When it became clear that, far from winning the campaign in a few days, the army was committed to winter on the Crimean heights, some effort was made by the War Office to send out warm clothes. Then, on 14th November, ten days after Inkerman, came the appalling storm which blew away the tents of the army and left widespread havoc everywhere. In the crowded little

harbour of Balaclava the ships were dashed on shore, or against each other, and those outside added to the destruction by trying to force their way to the shelter of the harbour. Twenty-four ships sank, and amongst them—as mentioned in a previous chapter—*The Prince*. When the miserable lack of warm things was known, it became customary for the authorities to say that they had “gone down in *The Prince*”, but as Flo sarcastically remarked, “all the commissariat put down any deficiencies to the loss of *The Prince*, it must have been very useful to them”. Dr. Hall had complacently reported that “he wanted nothing in the shape of stores or medical comforts”, but he and Florence differed radically as to what constituted “comforts”. Thus, she wrote: “I have become a general dealer in socks, shirts, handkerchiefs, knives, forks, wooden spoons, tin baths, operating tables, soap and scissors.”

Again, she would not let her patients suffer while the Purveyor and his Board delayed. When she wanted 27,000 clean shirts which she knew had arrived, the Purveyor told her they “could not be unpacked without a Board”, and the Board would not be meeting for three weeks. Here Florence simply used her own supplies, on which she could rely, as *The Times* at home continued to collect money for her, and it poured in from the whole of Britain. One day she said: “This morning I foraged in the Purveyor’s store. There are no mops, no plates, no trays, no slippers, no shoe-blackening, no basins.” All these deficiencies infuriated her, for she knew perfectly well that besides the absolute medical necessities, the men needed these things to keep themselves clean and neat, and to revive both their self-respect and their spirits.

The interminable slowness of the authorities made her

equally indignant. "To-day, to land a little sugar it took 4 oxen, and 2 men the space of six hours, and while the proceedings involved 2 'passes', 2 'requisitions', 2 'interferences', and 1 'apology'!" Another maddening point was that the hospital could be supplied only by the Purveyor on "requisitions" by the medical men, and the medical officers were often too busy with the sick and wounded to give these requisitions. Or, even when these were given, the Purveyor might say, "none in store", and even if the goods arrived the next day from England, the office would not notify the hospital, nor send them up.

One dialogue she reports in her letters home:

"Myself to the Purveyor: 'Are you expecting supplies, shirts and drinking cups from England?'"

"'No.'"

"'Are you taking steps to get them from Stamboul? (the quarter of Constantinople just across the Straits).'"

"'No.'"

"'Are any to be obtainable in Stamboul?'"

"'If they are, I don't know how to get them.'"

Such obstinacy infuriated her beyond words.

On 31st December she sent on a requisition from the hospital, and the document runs:

Flannel shirts.	Answer, none in store.
Socks.	Answer, none in store.
Drawers.	Answer, none in store.
Plates.	Answer, none in store.
Tin drinking cups.	Answer, none in store.
Pails for tea.	Answer, none in store.

She then wrote: "Are you expecting any of these things from England?" Answer, no.

"Are you getting them from Stamboul?" Answer, no.



Another detail was the fact that under the military regulations there were no rules for issuing the men with fresh kit if this had been "lost", and so, to take one item, we find her issuing 50,000 pairs of shoes, as the patients had come to hospital without any, and the authorities would not give them any when they were ready to be discharged. As Flo pointed out, this meant that many of her own stores, such as shirts, socks, handkerchiefs, had to be given to the men when they left hospital, and she was herself obliged to get fresh ones. In other words, she was helping to clothe the army. In dealing with all these matters she found her friends the Bracebridges invaluable. Mr. Bracebridge acted as her secretary, while the duties Mrs. Bracebridge undertook were so endless that she nicknamed herself "Boots".

We can perhaps guess that Florence quite enjoyed her battles with the Purveyor, but there was another struggle which gave her no pleasure at all. Her original band of thirty-eight had been selected as carefully as was possible, in view of the few trained women available, and the need for haste. Thirty-one others had followed, but some of the sixty-nine proved useless. Six of the Anglican sisters had returned at once, unable to face the work they were called on to do. Some of the remainder of her band soon began to give trouble. In view of the bad reputation of many of the women who hung about the army and the hospital, it was clear, from the outset, that the nurses must wear a uniform, to show who they were. The nuns and sisters had their robes, which were in general considered "becoming". They were, to our ideas, too full and flowing, and were, moreover, of wool, and not washable. But we have to remember that in the first place the Crimean winter made it essential for the clothes

to be warm, and also that, in 1854, all women, girls, and even children wore long, full, heavy dresses, and that the day of the "crinoline" being at hand, a skimpier dress would have been thought "improper", and certainly "unbecoming". For, as it was, vanity or the wish to look smart was to make the uniform Florence designed for her nurses generally unpopular with its wearers. She herself wore black, with white linen collar and cuffs, and black and white is always becoming. She could not wish her nurses to wear the brilliant colours of the period: magenta, royal blue, or the favoured tartan checks. She chose instead "grey woollen dresses, worsted jackets, and short woollen capes, with white caps". In addition, the nurses wore "brown holland" (i.e. pale buff) scarves, embroidered in red, with the word "Scutari". The little red "tippetts" which they wore were for warmth in the icy wards, and from them developed the scarlet shoulder capes which the "Queen's Nurses" later adopted. To our idea this uniform may seem quite suitable, but to the Victorian lover of brilliant colours it was drab and ugly in the extreme. One nurse, specially objecting to the caps, which were a necessity in order to try to keep the nurses' hair clean, said to her, as Flo wrote: "There is caps, ma'am, that suits one face, but not another, ma'am. If I'd known about the caps, ma'am, I'd not have come to the Crimea."

The nurses, cooped up in very close quarters—for at first fourteen of them had to be crowded into one small room—began to quarrel. There were difficulties, too, over the "ladies" who wished to devote themselves to nursing, and the women from the hospital who found the ladies expected them to do the scrubbing and cleaning. She wrote home: "Try to work a hospital with ladies and

nuns, and you will see what I mean. The ladies all quarrel amongst themselves. The medical men laugh at their helplessness, but like to have them about for the sake of a little female society, which is natural, but not our object."

Florence, whose whole heart was given to caring for the men, found these quarrels trying beyond belief. She wrote home: "Forty British females are more difficult to manage than four thousand men," and added, "so I count myself as a brigadier-general."

She is sometimes accused of being too harsh with her nurses. In the rules for them at Scutari, she strictly forbade them to drink "spirituous liquors", and none of them were allowed out alone; they had to go out in pairs, and only with leave. Yet in the Turkey of that day, probably this was only a wise precaution for their safety. She had not a very high opinion of their capacity: "Out of thirty-eight, only sixteen are efficient." On the other hand, she was very careful of their health. In those pestilential wards, some of the nurses caught infection, as Florence herself was to do later. Florence saw that those who were ill were nursed as well as could be, she wrote daily reports to their families at home, and when three of them died of typhus her letters show how much she grieved.

Through this question of the nurses came one of the things which apparently upset her more than anything else in the Crimea. She had come out as an "expert", and she set her whole iron determination to keeping up the efficiency and discipline of her staff. She was therefore overwhelmed with anger when she heard that a second and independent mission was coming out under Mary Stanley, daughter of the Bishop of Norwich. Mary had

been one of her greatest friends, and she was a woman of much sweetness and charm. But she was no nurse and no organizer, and her attitude on arrival was to say to the doctors: "Tell us what to do and we will do it."

She came out in a very haphazard way, with no authority, and therefore no pay, from the Government. Nor had she brought any money to pay for the expenses of herself and her nurses. Actually Florence had to advance her the money out of private funds. Above all, she came when she was not wanted, for there was absolutely no room for anyone at Scutari. The doctors had accepted Florence and her band, but they declared they would not have any more women landed on the hospital. As we have seen, even Flo herself had to share a tiny room, and it was quite impossible to find room for extra, and uncalled-for, helpers. They were, therefore, first planted out in private houses in Constantinople. Moreover, Mary Stanley's contingent was not to be under Florence, but under the senior medical officer. Quite furious at this, Florence wrote most angrily to Sidney Herbert, who, indeed, was quite overwhelmed by her letter. He offered to have Miss Stanley and her band recalled. However, Florence recovered her self-control, on finding that no attempt to undermine her authority had been intended. Mary and her nurses were finally sent off to Therapia, where they worked in a different hospital for the naval contingent. Another reason for Florence's anger was that she was always extremely strict on the principle that no religious feelings or prejudices should be allowed to enter into the work. Her personal friendship with Mary enabled her to know that Miss Stanley was thinking of joining the Church of Rome, as she did shortly after, and she knew that Mary thought the nurses ought to be allowed to give

the men "religious help" in their dying moments. To this Florence's greater experience was very much opposed, and perhaps her bitterness was due to the fact that she knew how much criticism women as nurses had to face in any case, and she found it unbearable to think that here was another possible ground for finding fault. She believed that in this "expedition" was to be found an attempt of the Churches to gain control over nursing. So she "cast off" her friend altogether and wrote: "To her whom I once thought my Mary, I have nothing to write. She has injured my work." The friendship was broken for good, and some have seen in Florence's anger and bitterness a sign that she herself was changing, and becoming harder and more domineering.

## CHAPTER XI

### Her Triumphs

During that terrible winter, the numbers of ill and dead mounted steadily. One of the incompetent features of the war was that no accurate statistics were kept. Still, we know that in August, 1854, the army under Raglan included 25,000 English troops, with about 3000 Germans, and 2000 Swiss. Reinforcements streamed out, and the total eventually sent to the Crimea was about 105,000. Of these, 30,000 died and 14,000 were wounded. The casualties inflicted by the enemy were, up to the end of November, about 10,000 killed and wounded. The numbers who were attacked by disease and



cold were far higher. In August, 1854, there were 11,000 sick; in November, 16,800; in December, 19,400; and in January, 1855, when no active fighting was going on, no less than 23,000 men were sent down sick to the hospital. This appalling figure was largely due to the bitter cold at the front, and complete lack of shelter there. Most of these sick were very young men; for example, out of 10,000 it was found that more than half were between 18 and 21 years old, and a quarter were between 21 and 24. There were no reports whatever on the state of the army's health until March, 1855. The work of Florence Nightingale, however, brought down the ghastly death rate in an astonishing way. From having been 41 per cent in October, it fell to 22 per thousand by March. The frightful conditions at the front, caused by the winter, were gradually improving, partly because the weather grew warmer, partly because more equipment came from England. Lord Raglan, who had confined himself to remarking in December, "The fall of snow has been very great, and the wind has added considerably to the sufferings of our men" (who at that time had not even the shelter of huts), could say in January: "I believe I may say that each man has now received a second blanket, and some kind of winter coat." He added: "The provision of fuel is a great difficulty." He omitted to comment on the fact that transport was an equally great difficulty. Horses had been taken out to the Crimea, for transport, but no forage was provided. Florence, who all her life loved horses, wrote bitterly: "Lord Cardigan is surprised to find his horses die at the end of a fortnight, because they are without rations. He said they 'chose to do so—obstinate brutes!'" The fact that there were no horses meant that everything had to be carried by the men, and thus the

route up from Balaclava harbour to the front lines, eight miles away, involved the wretched troops in journeys of sixteen miles over rough country to fetch any and every thing they needed. To cold, exhausted men this was the last straw. Their boots and shoes, too, wore out, and one writer described how officers and men alike were trying to wrap up their feet with sacks, rags, old rabbit skins—anything they could get—and this with deep snow on the ground.

Now, however, in late spring, at long last the much-needed metalled road was made up from Balaclava, and supplies could go up by horse and cart. With warmer weather, too, the diseases due to the bitter cold were checked. But if frostbite disappeared with the winter, fresh illness came with the warm weather—typhus and Asiatic cholera.

Cholera was a most deadly disease, and there was practically no means of fighting it. We have to remember that in those days neither anæsthetics nor antiseptics were known. Chloroform was used, but in a very strange way. Cholera patients suffered agonies of pain, like cramp. The remedy employed to try to relieve the pain was to boil blankets, wring them out, sprinkle chloroform on them, and wrap round the patient. This was called “stuping”. The heat may have helped the pain, but it did nothing to cure. Most cholera patients died within five hours of falling ill, and the death-rate was over sixty per cent.

Gradually, however, even this outburst died down, and the wards of Scutari began to empty at last.

In May, 1855, Florence decided to go over and visit the front in the Crimea. She herself was in authority only “in Turkey”, so that in the Crimea itself, which was in

Russia, she had no standing. She set off, however, as an honoured visitor. The soldiers at Balaclava base lined the cliffs to greet her with roars of cheering, in which the sailors on the ships all joined. She was met and welcomed by Lord Raglan himself. Only Dr. Hall pointedly did not come down to meet her. He had reported "the health of the men, and the state of the hospitals is very creditable", but in point of fact there were still numbers falling sick, over 350 daily from fever, over 500 from dysentery, and "other diseases, 528".

As a child and young woman Florence had ridden a great deal. Now, mounted on "a beautiful, bright chestnut", she rode everywhere, up and down the hills, and across the high plateaux of the Crimea. There is a charming water-colour showing her on one of these rides. She and her companion are represented on horseback, Florence very slim and elegant in her riding-habit. All around stretches the wide landscape of the Crimean uplands, with rolling hills, all bright in the sunshine. Far below lies Sebastopol, its walls and forts catching the light, while near at hand is a grim reminder of what this place had witnessed in the shape of rows of rough crosses marking one of the many graveyards.

It was early May, and everywhere the air was sweet with the scent of thyme and wild mignonette. She loved flowers, and at each place where she stayed would pick great bowls. One man, visiting a wooden hut high up in the hills, found a jar of flowers beautifully arranged, and was told that Miss Nightingale had been that way the day before. She noticed the wild life, the hares that coursed over the open, and the great golden eagles which soared overhead, and the falcons and bustards.

Her practical task was to see to the setting up of

diet kitchens, and the great French chef, M. Soyer, came with her. He had come out to help the French army, and had then gone to Scutari to help Florence. He had invented a famous "field kitchen", but it would only boil and stew, it would not roast. He was horrified at the English methods, especially the way in which all meat and vegetables were thrown into cauldrons to boil together. Later on he wrote of his experiences in a book *Campaign Culinary*. While with Florence, he not only inspected the field kitchens, but he used to condescend to cook special meals for her, and for the eminent persons who came to visit her.

By now, Florence's fame had grown so great that every village in England had collected "parcels and comforts", which she distributed to the camps. She had what we would call a "fan-mail", which was dealt with first in England by her sister, who took a house and engaged a regular staff to deal with it. Gone were the days when Flo and her nursing were "odd".

Now, to all her admirers, both amongst the soldiers and at home, came the bad news that she had fallen ill. She was never ill at Scutari, in the pestilential wards of the hospital, but here, out in the Crimea itself, she caught what was called "Crimean fever". She was very ill, and possibly the bad health which was to overtake her middle age dates from this. For a while she was in danger. Her mother wrote: "I thank God she is ready for life or death." The feeling aroused by her illness was intense. Many of the soldiers cried when they heard she was in danger. One of the surgeons wrote home: "How will they part with her, what will they do without her?" In England people were equally upset. It seemed too cruel that she, who had saved so many, should now die. She

did not die, however, she recovered. Her aunt, who now came out to join her, was delighted at her appearance, for during her illness her hair had to be cut off, and she now had short, light, wavy hair, which under her little muslin cap was most becoming, and which her aunt said made her look years younger. When she was really better, she resumed her tour.

Fighting was still going on before Sebastopol, and she rode up, with Lord Raglan, to visit the front. Everywhere she passed the soldiers rushed out to cheer her. She found conditions still bad. "The men are for 36 hours at a stretch in the trenches, often for 48 hours with no food, but raw, salt pork." Soyer noted that the English army was suffering terribly from scurvy, which he said was partly the result of the lack of vegetables, but also of the undue amount of salt in the meat. She wrote home: "I wonder not at the army having suffered so much, but that there is any army left at all."

While she had been recovering there is a story of how an officer, plainly dressed, and in a military cloak, rode up to ask if he could see her. He was told she was not well enough, and being asked his name said: "Oh! tell her it was just a friend who knows her well." It was Lord Raglan himself, and she, hearing his voice, called for him to come in. A few weeks later he himself died quite suddenly, worn out at his great age—he was now nearly eighty—by the rigours of the campaign. He had made many mistakes, but we can at least say that he had cared for his men, and had appreciated the work of the woman who had done so much for them. Her energy was not apparently at all abated by her illness. Her tour finished, she wished to go back to Scutari. She believed that Dr. Hall tried by a trick to embark her at Balaclava on a ship



which was not returning to Scutari but going direct to England. She refused to sail on it and wrote angrily: "Dr. Hall is attempting to root me out." She went back to the Barrack Hospital, not so much now to save life, as to care for the happiness of convalescents. She was laying the foundations for another part of her life-work.

Already, in earlier months, she had herself provided the sick men with paper and pencils so that they could write home. She set to work now to provide them with many other things to amuse them, such as books. She saw to details which might make the men more comfortable in the ward. Thus she noted they had "nowhere to keep their pencils and knives and so on", and she had lockers made to go by each bed. The officers did not at all share her views. One said: "You are spoiling the brutes." She believed, as well she might after all she had seen, in the "nobility of human nature" as shown by the soldiers. She provided the men with classes. She got 1000 copy-books sent out, and writing materials, and maps, and set to work to get the men taught. She said they needed "schoolrooms", with masters, thus anticipating our modern education for the troops. She tried to get music for them, and even plays for acting, one notable success being *Macbeth*. Florence herself was specially interested in *Macbeth* because of the sleep-walking scene. She said she had often seen feverish patients get out of their beds and "re-enact a scene of long ago, as if sleep-walking", and Lady Macbeth's actions struck her as profoundly true to life. She got sets of chess and magic-lanterns, and encouraged those who were well enough to play football.

Convinced herself that the men would prefer to try to

save their pay, instead of spending it all on the only thing they could get—drink—she started “savings” organizations. Some of the senior officers jeered at this, and said the soldier was “not a remitting animal”. How right she was is proved by the fact that within six months her soldiers had sent back over £71,000 to their families. Encouraged by this she fought, and won, a battle to have less of their pay deducted when they were in hospital. Up to now each man had 10*d.* stopped when he went sick; she got this deduction altered to 7*d.* The young officers joined in her savings scheme with enthusiasm, and brought her their money to safeguard. On one occasion she wrote: “I have had thousands of sovereigns at a time in my office.” She found, too, that the men enjoyed being taught to sew. They learnt to hem handkerchiefs and towels for the hospital; they mended their jackets and trousers. One man made a dress for the wife of an officer, which was voted a great success, and another triumphantly embroidered a bead pin-cushion for his wife.

After her illness she often travelled about in a little open carriage, with a canvas hood, visiting the men in camp, as well as those in hospital. She became convinced that they must be given amusement, and not left just to drink. Drinking was the curse of the soldier, but she saw it was largely because he had no alternative. So she set up “reading rooms”, got newspapers, illustrated papers and books. In June came a military disaster, the failure of the British attack on the Russian lines. But by now reinforcements in plenty had arrived. We know about the sufferings of the British army; we can only guess at those of the Russians. That they had been at least as severe, if not worse than those of our men, can be told from the state of things which was found after

the end of the war. By early autumn the Russians were weakening.

All through this winter and spring, the Allied forces had been vainly continuing their attack on Sebastopol. The Russians had fortified the place very strongly, and the Allies were continually trying to capture the great forts in the outer defences. Their artillery, however, was used only on those forts which were so well protected that little effect was produced. Lord Palmerston voiced what many people thought when he criticized Lord Raglan's policy. Palmerston held that the Allies should have shelled the city itself, and that Raglan's refusal to do so was "mistaken humanitarianism", for it only prolonged the struggle and wasted lives. Attempts to carry the forts by storm failed repeatedly. After Raglan's death the city was bombarded, and then, in June, 1855, came the two famous attacks on the great redoubts, the Redan attacked by the British, and the Malakoff by the French. The British, after storming the Redan, were driven off again. The French took the Malakoff. This really made the Russian position hopeless, for the line of forts was breached. In August the British finally captured the Redan, the Russian army retreated northwards, and early in September Sebastopol itself surrendered. It was now only a matter of negotiations. During the winter these were carried on. Czar Nicholas was dead, and his successor, Alexander II, wished for peace. It came in the spring, and in May the ghastly, futile war was ended.

Now the British army was to leave the Crimea. Florence's work there was ended, and when the troops were embarked it was expected she would leave with them. She decided against this. She really hated publicity. She had no wish for personal fame, and she de-

tested the idea of a public reception. So for some weeks she stayed on in Scutari. Lord Ellesmere, speaking in the House of Lords, said: "The angel of mercy still lingers on the scene of her labours. Though the long arcades of Scutari in which dying men sat up to catch the sound of her footsteps, or the flutter of her dress, and fell back content to have seen her shadow as she passed, are now deserted."

She had stayed for a while during the winter in Constantinople, and we are given an account of the dinner at the British Embassy on Christmas Day, 1855, to which she went. One guest wrote: "I felt quite dumb as I looked at her wasted form and the brown hair, cut short when her life was despaired of from fever. Her dress was black, made high to the throat. She wore a close, white cap, with a white crêpe handkerchief, which only allowed the border of lace to be seen." Another said: "Her quiet manner, and her great renown, told so powerfully in that assembly of brilliant dress and uniform." Possibly Florence, like Lord Castlereagh when he appeared in plain black court dress at the Congress of Vienna, may have known that, when the majority of persons present are resplendent in colour and glitter, the individual who can appear in plain black will stand out the more. But perhaps that is an uncharitable view to take. She had left her own rich dresses at home in England, and wore what she now habitually wore, plain, dark, simple clothes. The same observer wrote: "She is very slight, her dark grey eyes are kind but penetrating, but her face does not give you at all the idea of great talent. She was still very weak, but sat on a sofa and looked on at the games. Sometimes she laughed till the tears came to her eyes." So she had not lost her sense of fun. Everyone present realized what

this woman had done, and the general feeling was summed up by one of the soldier guests who, looking at her, murmured, "greatest of all in name and honour among women".

Peace had been signed in March, but she did not leave for another four months. She wrote home, giving warm praise to all the women who had helped her. She accepted a diamond bracelet from the Sultan of Turkey.<sup>1</sup> She refused, however, anything which would draw attention to her return. She was offered a passage in a man-of-war, but she declined it. The regiments of the Coldstreams, the Grenadiers, and the Fusiliers wanted to come and meet her when she arrived in England, and to bring their three bands. She gratefully declined that offer too. She went overland to Paris, stayed in a small hotel, and told no one of her proposed time-table. She slipped across the Channel, and spent a night in London with the nuns at Bermondsey who had been members of her original band. Then she went home, quite unrecognized, by train. She got out at the little wayside station and "walked up through the lanes". She had brought with her a puppy, found astray near Balaclava, and amongst her papers "a bunch of grass, picked from the ground watered by our men's blood at Inkerman". She joined her family, quite as if she had returned from an ordinary trip abroad, with no sort of demonstration. Yet, since she had parted from them, she had become the most celebrated woman in the world.

<sup>1</sup> Now in the United Services Museum, Whitehall.



## CHAPTER XII

## Nursing and Hospital Reforms

Florence Nightingale's work in the Crimea was over, but she never for one moment intended to give up the career begun in such a startling way. Peace had come, but "peace hath its victories", and she intended to continue her war against suffering. She saw quite clearly that she had proved women could be trained as nurses. She was more convinced than ever that here was the chance of opening a new profession for women. That was one definite thing. She had also been convinced from all she had seen and experienced, that the conditions of life in the army were bad, and that a great deal could and should be done to improve those conditions.

*1. The Training of Nurses.*

She had come back to snatch a brief rest, but she had also come back filled with the determination to achieve two things. "I stand," she wrote, "at the altar of the murdered men, and while I live, I fight their cause." She meant to set up a proper system of trained nurses, and she meant to reform the conditions under which the British soldier lived and died. "Seven thousand of my children are lying in their forgotten graves," she wrote, but they were not forgotten by her, and so she began a long struggle which was to occupy the whole of the rest of her life.

To many, Florence Nightingale is known only for her work in the Crimean War. Yet she was to live for a long

time, actually more than fifty more years, devoting all her ability and gifts to the work to which she had now dedicated herself.

In planning out her work she was helped by the immense renown she had won. Caring nothing at all for herself, for the fame and publicity she might have received, she still could use her wonderful popularity to help the causes she had at heart.

For she was certainly the most famous person in England. People called their children after her, ships were named from her, even a racehorse was called "Miss Nightingale". Poems were composed in her honour, songs sung, even little china models of the "Lady with the Lamp" were to be seen everywhere.

Besides her immense popularity with the working classes, whose sons and husbands she had nursed, she won, at the other end of the scale, the warm approval of the Royal family. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert did two things. First they invited her to come and stay with them at Balmoral. She went, and her comments are extremely characteristic. Of Albert, she wrote later: "He neither liked, nor was liked by the English, but what he has done for our country, no one knows." As to the Queen: "She reminds me," wrote Flo, "of the Greek chorus, with her hands clasped above her head, wailing out her irrepressible despair."

The high command, who had so bungled the war, were rewarded with titles and decorations. No woman could, in those days, be given a public honour, and indeed it is doubtful if Florence would have accepted one. The Queen, however, sent her a personal mark of her appreciation. It was a brooch, designed by the Prince Consort, with the cross of St. George in red enamel, and "V.R."

with a crown in diamonds. Round cross and cypher ran a band with the words upon it "Blessed are the merciful".<sup>1</sup>

The nation, however, was resolved, if she would not accept a public reception, that she should accept a public gift. A fund was opened to be presented to her to be used as she liked. Money poured in from all quarters. The troops, out of their scanty pay, subscribed no less than £9000. We may note that Dr. Hall, now promoted to be Sir John Hall, did not subscribe a penny, and her old critic, Colonel Sterling, said that *he* should not subscribe, nor would many of the "medicals". No less than £47,000 was subscribed in all by the public, one large donation coming through a concert at which Jenny Lind sang. She decided at once to use the money to start the "School for Nurses" on which she had set her heart, and in that training of women she employed her money, and found her true memorial.

The "Nightingale Nurses" were to be women, trained in a hospital, who took nursing as their profession. Now Florence herself had no illusions about women as born to be "ministering angels". She was always extremely realistic in her point of view, and her experiences of the women who went to the Crimea had given her a certain caustic bitterness. She once said: "If I were to write a book out of my experience, I should begin, 'Women have no sympathy'." She also found women very obstinate. "Men," she said, "would alter their ideas," but women never, and once she broke out indignantly: "I am sick with indignation at what women will do from the most egregious selfishness." Yet she saw clearly that women could be trained, and needed the outlet

<sup>1</sup> This brooch is now in the United Services Museum, Whitehall.

of this profession. "Plenty of work and plenty of responsibility are the two effective means of steadying women."

Her project was not really warmly welcomed by many who might have known better. Lady Palmerston, who was herself an intelligent person, seems to have thought that the drunken "Sairey Gamp" type must not be too harshly judged, she "thinks it all great humbug. The nurses do perhaps drink a little, but it must be tiresome sitting up all night." Lord Melbourne said he hated to be nursed by a woman. "I would rather have men about me when I am ill. It requires very strong health to put up with women . . . they fidget me with the creak of their crinolines, or their silk, and the crackling of their starched petticoats, and the creaking of their stays." Indeed, the voluminous, stuffy costumes of the period did make women very unfit for the sick-room. Needless to say Melbourne was thinking of people of his own class, nursed by their relations. Florence really meant to take nursing out of the hands of incompetent relatives, and give it to trained women who, of course, would wear neither crinolines nor silk.

Indeed, we have to notice here that Florence on the whole had no very high opinion of the "feminine" qualities attributed to women. The terrible lack of sympathy shown by her own mother and sister towards her in her earlier years seems to have embittered her for ever. So she could write: "In one sense I do believe I am 'like a man'. But how? In having sympathy. I am sure I have nothing else. I am sure my contemporaries, Parthe and others, were all cleverer than I was, and several of them more unselfish. But not one had a bit of sympathy . . . women crave for *being loved* not for loving. They scream out at you for sympathy all day long, they are in-

capable of giving *any* in return, for they cannot remember your affairs long enough to do so." And again: "People often say to me, you don't know what a wife and mother feels. 'No,' I say, 'I don't, and I'm very glad I don't.' And they don't know what *I* feel. . . . I am sick with indignation at what wives and mothers will do from pure selfishness, and people call it all maternal affection, and think it pretty to do so."

She saw her goal and worked steadily for it. She had the support of the Prince Consort, who warmly favoured her idea of attaching a school for nurses to St. Thomas's Hospital. She had been drawn to that special hospital because one of her most efficient helpers in the Crimea, Mrs. Roberts, had come from St. Thomas's, and she also had the greatest admiration for Mrs. Wardroper, the superintendent of nurses there. So she founded her school. The candidates were chosen with great care. She started it off with fifteen. She herself drew up the regulations under which they were to live. She was most emphatic that they must "live in", and be under proper discipline, and here we have to reckon with the immense Victorian prejudice and dread against girls living away from home. She laid down that they must always go out in pairs, but as one cheerful girl wrote later: "Of course we only went to the corner of the street together," after that they would part and go their own way. In the long years of life which lay before her, Florence always kept the most intense interest in her nurses. Each year she wrote a long "letter" to be read aloud, and for years each nurse had a "dossier", which was given to Miss Nightingale, in which the good qualities of the girl concerned were noted, as well as any "black marks". She would take the greatest pains over individuals, and her



accounts show payments for "food baskets", which she would provide for nurses passing through London on their way to different parts. One rather odd feature of her old age was that the more affectionate side of her character, so much repressed in youth and middle age, came out in her dealings with some of these girls, to whom she wrote in terms of the warmest, indeed of the most sentimental affection, a trait which, unpleasing in some ways, is pathetic in others. Her first nurses entered in 1860, and fifteen were chosen from those who came forward as candidates. These nurses were to live in special quarters; they were to train to nurse in the hospital and were not to take private patients. Each had a bedroom to herself. They were paid £10 a year, and after the first year were to sit for an examination. They were to wear uniform, grey with white collar and cuffs. The sisters were to wear blue. Soon the numbers rose, and gradually the profession of "trained nurse" was evolved. We can perhaps notice here that the foundation of trained modern nurses was not her only contribution to the relief of sickness. The founding of the Red Cross is due, as has been stated, to her inspiration. It was actually started by a Swiss, Henri Dunant, in the Franco-Prussian war, but Dunant stated definitely that he owed the idea to Florence. He said: "Though I am known as the founder of the Red Cross, it is to an Englishwoman that all the honour is due. What inspired me was the work of Miss Florence Nightingale in the Crimea."

## 2. *Hospital Reforms.*

Setting up the Nightingale Nurses was one step. But the beginning had to be made on such a small scale, and the numbers trained each year were so few, that Florence

decided to try to spread her ideas more widely. She began to write, and she produced first *Notes on Hospitals*, and then, in 1859, *Notes on Nursing*.

The *Notes on Hospitals* was written as the result of an inquiry she had made into the conditions in English hospitals. We have seen that as a girl she had been good at mathematics, and always when she grew up, interested in statistics. The experience of the Crimea had driven home to her the need for accurate information and figures. Now she applied this to the state of the hospitals, and what that in turn showed of the state of the nation's health.

In her book she explained the reforms which she thought should be introduced into hospitals, and her suggestions show us how bad the state of affairs was then. First, she said hospitals should be built on carefully chosen sites, with good sanitation, and if possible open spaces. They should be well ventilated, windows should be made to open, and there should be plenty of fresh air. That was considered a most startling idea, and the Prime Minister, speaking in the House of Commons, said: "Strange as it may appear, mankind has found out that pure air is conducive to the well-being of the body."

Next she wanted cleanliness. Bedsteads should be made of iron, so that they could be washed and kept free from bugs; hitherto Victorians had used wooden bedsteads, which in the hospitals were almost invariably infested with lice. (Even in scrupulously clean well-to-do households like the Carlyle's we hear of the bedsteads having to be fumigated as bugs had got in.)

Then she wanted more comfort for the patients. Mattresses should be stuffed with hair, not lumpy flock or straw. Good bed-linen must be provided, and she said

the patients ought to have their drinks in glass or earthenware, not in pewter or wood. Here again she was ahead of her time in realizing how much patients are affected by little details. One London hospital, a few years ago, tried the experiment of giving women patients their tea in mugs, to avoid the labour and washing up and the breakage of cups and saucers, but found as a result the women did not enjoy their tea as much, and this in turn did not help on convalescence.

She said that walls in the wards should be washable, and done in bright, clear colours, for that again helped the patients. She wanted flowers to be arranged in the wards, for she said she knew "the rapture which a bunch of bright flowers brings to fevered patients".

Warmth must be provided, and she specially condemned those hospitals she had visited where windows were boarded up to "give warmth". She insisted that while there must be ventilation, there must also be proper heating.

The book was a great success, and from all quarters letters poured in on her. Hospitals wrote asking for her advice, and municipal authorities who wanted to set up new hospitals consulted her, for now public health was beginning to be dealt with by public authorities. Architects wrote to her for hints, and from great cities such as Leeds, down to little country towns like Guildford, came requests for advice.

### 3. *Her Writings.*

Next she turned her attention to reaching the many women who were nursing without being trained, and who could not obtain training. For them she wrote one of her most famous books, *Notes on Nursing*. It was published in

1859, and within a month over 15,000 copies were sold, and it went on selling. It was meant first to enable a woman to teach herself how to nurse. This little manual is amazingly interesting to us to-day, for it shows both how wise she was, and how very far in advance of her day.

For example, she was a great believer in fresh air, and at a time when all windows were closed every night, and usually kept closed all autumn and winter. She was always urging the importance of opening them. Again, she thought it very important for all patients to have plenty of light. Lord Panmure sneered at her for wanting "all glass and glare", but when she could get her ideas put into practice, as at the rebuilding of St. Thomas's Hospital, she saw that the wards were well lit. She pointed out that people who are ill do not turn away from light, or when in bed turn their faces "to the wall", they always like to lie towards the light, outwards towards air.

Again, she showed profound insight into the minds of the patients, what we call their "psychology". She wrote: "Patients don't want to be cheered up and exhorted." She knew they often were too exhausted to make great efforts, and to urge them on was bad. She even noted down such details as the importance of daintiness. "Don't let a patient's cup be sloppy; a damp saucer will mean a stained bed."

She spoke of the need for colour, and flowers and pictures. "Some sick persons feel stimulus from looking at scarlet flowers." She said, too, that nurses should not be too strict in thwarting a patient's wishes, even over food. "You can't always diet a patient from a book," and though ill people sometimes craved for odd things, "the patient's stomach is right, and the book wrong". She was a great believer in tea (in which the most recent

experience of war hospitals supports her to-day). She said sleepless and tired people needed it. She stressed the fact that most patients needed "fresh air, light, and warmth", but she never tired of impressing the fact that the individual mentality was all-important, and the patient's happiness was one of the most powerful helps to recovery.

## CHAPTER XIII

### Personal Life

We must now turn to the personal life of Florence after her return from the Crimea, for not only was her whole position altered, but a very remarkable change took place in her, and one which has led to many arguments.

She came home, apparently recovered from her illness, and in good health. She was thirty-six years old, and might have been expected to lead a normal life. Of course, she was tired out, and her friends and relations urged her to take a long rest. She would have been wise to do so, but she would not. It seems as if she still could not get on happy terms with her mother and sister, and it is quite certain she was resolved to break away from any attempt to tie her down again at home. Up to this time she had been a very active woman, walking, riding and travelling. After her return she became a semi-invalid, shut herself up, and would not receive visitors. People have wondered and puzzled over this. Was she really ill, or was it all a pose? Did she deliberately shut herself



away, and encourage her "invalidism", so as to keep herself apart and free? Her sister wrote, in 1857: "She will not let anyone know what she is about . . . she will not even tell *us*," and Flo was certainly extremely angry if any of her close friends discussed her health with her family. She stayed at her home, Lea Hurst, for a few months, then moved to London, and at first settled down at a hotel, the "Burlington", in old Burlington Street. Here she "took to her sofa", and we are told that she had frequent heart attacks, and at times believed herself to be dying. Yet there could have been nothing very seriously wrong with her, for she was to live to be ninety years old, and to accomplish a vast amount of hard work.

At the time many of her best and most devoted friends were impatient with her. Sidney Herbert, admiring and loyal as he was, said to her: "Why can't you, who do men's work, take man's exercise, in some shape?" She would not, however. She gave up all active exercise, never rode or drove, and only occasionally, and even then in secret, would go across to Hyde Park for a breath of air.

She had, of course, set herself free from her parents' house. She never lived at home again, and she does seem to have used this "invalidism" as a means of not seeing her mother and sister if she did not wish. No one could see her unless she sent down word, and very frequently Mrs. Nightingale and Parthe would be told she was "not well enough" to see them.

After a while she decided to leave the hotel and set up in a home of her own, and she took various houses; moving often from one to the other, living first in Belgravia, then in Hampstead, and finally settling down in South Street, off Park Lane.

She probably did, modern writers think, suffer at first from "dilation of the heart", due to her terrible overwork in the Crimea. The remedy for this would have been rest. When she first came back, however, she could not rest. She could not settle down with the irritations of Parthe at home, and perhaps, too, she was still so moved by the suffering she had seen that she felt she must set to work at once to press on with reforms. Then, as she refused to take life easily, she did begin to suffer from reaction, and definitely had heart trouble. Increasing ill-health made her take to her bed, and having once done that she never resumed normal life. Either she became what we would to-day call a neurasthenic, and was afraid to be active, or just possibly she found certain advantages in this secluded, invalid life, and kept it up when she need not have done so. For, shutting herself up in her room, with devoted friends to do all her housekeeping, and all her secretarial work, she was free both to work on her own lines, and free, too, from tiresome interruption. She very rarely indeed went to either Lea Hurst or Embley, after she had her own house. Parthe married a widower, Sir Henry Verney of Claydon. Flo liked him, and he and Parthe came to live near her in London. He could persuade her to slip across into Hyde Park for a stroll with him. She used to go and stay at Claydon, and her rooms there remain to this day as they were when she used them, with their Victorian furniture and Victorian water-colours and engravings.

That in the main she suffered by thus losing direct contact with the outer world, seems likely. No amount of reading of blue-books, studying statistics, interviewing experts, can really compensate for first-hand knowledge. Yet whereas the Crimea had been "one crowded hour of

glorious life ", the long years which followed were to be years entirely devoted to work which was of the greatest value to all sections of humanity. She is remembered for the startling work in the Crimea, and yet her patient toil afterwards has been largely forgotten.

First and foremost to her came work for the army. She never forgot, she never could forget, the soldiers amongst whom she had toiled. The men and boys whom she had seen suffering and dying always remained in her mind. She consecrated her whole life to helping the soldiers who came after her.

In her efforts for reform of living conditions in the army, for reform of the medical services, and of the army hospitals, she still had her old opponents with whom to contend. Dr. Hall had been made a K.C.B. (Knight Commander of the Bath), which, she said grimly, she would prefer to stand for " Knight of the Crimean Burying grounds ". Official ignorance of conditions was still the worst thing she had to contend against. Her weapon was the collecting of facts and figures which could not be denied. She wished to show that the life of a soldier in peace-time was far more dangerous than the life of a civilian. Soldiers died at an appalling rate because their barracks were so bad. Thus, using her gift for statistics with devastating effect, she could show that, whereas in civilian life in Kensington the death-rate was 3·3 per 1000, in the Knightsbridge barracks, set down in the midst of that area, the death-rate was 17·5. In the slum area of St. Pancras the civilian death-rate was 2·2, but in the Life Guards it was 10·4. In addition, as she pointed out, the army was composed of young men, and presumably strong and healthy young men when they entered the army.

In order to bring home the facts which lay behind all the horrors of the Crimea, she and her friends pressed for a commission of inquiry into the medical side of the war. Lord Panmure, the Secretary for War, opposed this, but Sidney Herbert carried the day against him, and the Royal Commission was set up. Florence was officially asked to make a report, and the volumes which she wrote as a result exist to this day.

They give figures which tell their own tale. In the first seven months of the Crimean War, the mortality rate was *sixty per cent per annum*, and was chiefly due to disease which could have been cured, but which was simply neglected. She piled up facts and figures, and threw her whole energies into this showing-up of criminal neglect. In order to get this work done, she had to make use of the men who believed in her so firmly. Chief of these was Sidney Herbert, who came to see her every day. He worked so hard that, as we shall see, he eventually broke down and died. Another even more devoted person was Dr. Sutherland, whom she had met in the Crimea, and whom she now really "annexed" as a secretary. When he was considered by the War Office for a post in connexion with an outbreak of cholera in the Mediterranean, she would not even let him be told of the plan. "He is so childish," she said, "that if he heard of this business he would instantly declare there was nothing to keep him in England."

She insisted on these men working for her in this way, because she was certain the work must be done, and done properly, if the soldiers of the future were to be saved from the fate which had overtaken the soldiers of the past. She must have men to do the work, because she could not find any women capable of doing it. "It makes me mad,"

she burst out. "The Women's Rights talk about 'the want of a field of work for women', when I know that I would gladly give £500 a year for a woman secretary . . . women don't know the names of Cabinet Ministers. They don't know which of the men of the day is dead and who is alive. . . . Now I am sure I did not know these things. When I went to the Crimea I did not know a colonel from a corporal. But there are such things as army lists and almanacks. Yet I never could find one woman who would consult one."

In all this work she was to do after the war, Florence chose to be, so to speak, "behind the scenes". She never wished to appear prominent, nor indeed as the moving spirit she really was. She lived and worked secluded in her own home. There she got many people to collect for her all the information she wanted. There, too, she saw the men who pushed her schemes in public. She was always the "power behind the throne". So great was her determination to avoid publicity, that when the great commission to inquire into the Crimea was held, she was not a member of that Commission, though her great fame and her great knowledge of Crimean conditions might have made it likely she should be a member. Instead, she drew up her own "report", and she was called before the Commission as a witness. It is interesting to notice the impression she made. A doctor wrote: "It may surprise many persons to find from Miss Nightingale's evidence that, added to feminine graces, she possesses not only the gift of acute perception, but she reasons with a strong, acute, most logical, and if we may say so, masculine intellect, that may well shame some of the other witnesses." Those "other witnesses" indeed really throw a flood of light on the reasons for the Crimean mismanagement: "They



maunder through their subjects as though they had by no means made up their minds on any one point—‘ they would and they would not ’, and they almost seem to think two parallel lines may sometimes be made to meet by dint of courtesy and good feeling, admirable motives that should never be trusted in matters of duty.” And again: “ When you have to encounter ministers of officialdom straight-hitting is the best mode of attack. In all Miss Nightingale says there is a clearness, a pungency and abruptness, a ring as to true metal, that is altogether admirable.”

As to the reforms she specially urged, first came the need for better training for the medical officers, and the Army Medical Training School was shortly afterwards set up at Milbank. Next she urged a different plan for the building of military hospitals. Scutari had brought home to her the immense importance of buildings. She had seen how vast blocks, with long corridors and small wards, had been bad for the patients. She wanted to see what she called “ pavilions ”, which could receive light and air from all sides, and which would do without the immense corridors, where all food got cold and all workers tired. The great hospital at Netley was just being built, and she and Sidney Herbert fought hard to have it built on the new lines. Desperately as they struggled, however, they did not win, for the plans had already been accepted, and the authorities would not change. Her ideas were, however, given shape in the new St. Thomas’s Hospital, and its blocks or pavilions rose to face the new Houses of Parliament across the Thames. Next she tackled the question of food in barracks. Better kitchens and cooking facilities must be provided. Troops, both ill and well, needed properly cooked meals, and for the ill she stressed

the absolute necessity of proper diets, that is to say, the provision of milk, arrowroot and gruel, not just the issuing of a smaller amount of the usual salt meat. She also pointed out how the French army had fared better throughout the Crimea from its use of vegetables, the French troops not having suffered from scurvy and skin diseases as the English did. She insisted that lime juice must be supplied to supplement the vegetables.

Her report and recommendations were pressed on the Government by Sidney Herbert, and as we know they were gradually accepted. Every inch gained, however, was at the cost of a great struggle. Florence, hidden away in her own room, did the writing, drew up the statistics, got together the facts. She wrote the report itself with her own hands. Sidney Herbert had to do all the active part, pressing home her points before the Commission and in Parliament, and wrestling with obstructive officials. He had always been a delicate man, now he fell ill, and he realized he had not very much longer to live. This constant pressure on her friends, who had many other duties to attend, whilst she could remain quietly in her room, did exhaust them. Thus she is sometimes accused of having "worked to death" both Sidney Herbert and the poet Arthur Hugh Clough—one of her most ardent helpers—but that is a very strong attitude to take. These men were as keen and as ardent as she was. What they did, they did of their own free will, and the fact that both were delicate men, with other work and occupations, who might, for all we know, have worn themselves out in any case, must be considered before she is blamed.

Now comes one of the sad things in her career, and one which it is most difficult to understand. One day, in 1861, Herbert went as usual to see Florence, but this

time it was not to report on the work, it was to tell her that his health was failing, that he probably had only a short time to live, and that they must now decide how best he could use the remnant of time and strength left to him. Florence was devoted to Sidney Herbert. She was not "in love" with him, nor he with her. They had met in the old days, when he was a most happily married man, and when Flo herself was hesitating whether to marry Monckton Milnes. Mrs. Herbert helped her husband in all his work; she was Florence's friend, and Florence loved her too. Flo's relation with Herbert was that of two individuals working together with passionate enthusiasm for ends which both believed in. It was a true friendship in the deepest sense, but it was nothing more. They had worked together so long and so closely, yet now at this terrible crisis Florence seems hard and almost cruel. She expressed her horror that their work should come to an end; she agreed that he should accept a peerage and become Lord Herbert, so that his laborious days in the Commons should no longer exhaust him. But she did not openly express her personal grief. Possibly she felt more than she dared express to this man who had told her he was dying. For when he did die her grief was terrible. In one sense she never was the same again. "He takes my life with him," she wrote; "my work, and the means to do it, all depart with him." He was, as everyone has agreed, one of the most charming and lovable men of the day. His face was beautiful, sensitive and gentle, and his charm was felt by everyone. Theirs had been a most wonderful partnership. They saw eye to eye in the reforms they worked for, and where she had the practical experience of the Crimea, and the hard, stern ability to get to the root of evils, he had the patience, the

calm, the perseverance to press those reforms on the administration. Between them they had done a great work, and his loss was indeed irreparable.

Yet we can get a rather horrifying glimpse of the way in which she had hardened herself against personal feelings, when we find her writing after Herbert's death: "The mere personal craving after a beloved presence, I feel as nothing . . . few people know what I have lost. No two people pursue together the same object as I did with him. And when they lose their companion by death they have in fact lost companionship. My work, the object of my life, and the means to do it, depart with him." Her work, the mainspring of her life, was injured by his death, and hence her crushing misery. Sidney Herbert's statue stands by hers in the Crimean Monument in Waterloo Place, and he shares with her the credit of their joint work. We may say that with the adoption of the suggestions put forward in that famous report, the work they were to do together was accomplished. Now she had lost him, and she turned her energies and enthusiasm into a fresh channel.

## CHAPTER XIV

### India: Poor Law: Women's Rights

#### I. *India.*

As the motive of Florence's life after 1854 was the welfare of the British army, so she was concerned with that army serving abroad. The troops had to serve in India, and thus her mind was led on to consider the state

of the troops there. The Indian Mutiny broke out in 1857, and she volunteered to go out to the army. Her health, however, was far too bad and she had to give up the idea. Once the Mutiny was over, efforts were made to reform the administration, and now Florence took up the cause of the white troops serving in India. Later she was to become interested in the Indians themselves. At first she concentrated on showing the terrible mortality amongst the white men. Her natural love of mathematics had helped her to understand the importance of accurate statistics. She could show the horrifying fact that out of every 73,000 men sent to do peace-time service in India, 5000 died each year, a mortality rate of 69 per thousand, higher even than the worst days of the Crimea. She got details as to the mortality at different ages, and of length of service. Finally, through her persistence, a Royal Commission was appointed in 1859, and reported that the real mischief was bad sanitation. There was bad water, bad drainage, bad ventilation.

She could point to the incredible stupidity of the Government in India in dealing with sanitary questions. Thus, after the Mutiny in one city, there were dead bodies of men, horses, asses, bullocks, even elephants, left polluting the streets, yet the Government of Bombay would not appoint an official to clean up these corpses in the city "because there was no precedent". She pointed out how certain districts were specially unhealthy, and troops should either not be sent to such districts, or if sent, it should only be for a short time.

As she studied Indian problems she became convinced that the provision of water was absolutely essential. "If the facilities for washing were as great as those for drink, our Indian army would be the cleanest body of men in



the world." As it was, the water supply was both dirty and dangerous, wherever a water supply might be said to exist.

She developed this idea of pure water into the belief that through irrigation, that is the supplying of water for crops, the wretched poverty of India might be remedied. Here again we know now how right she was, and how much in advance of her contemporaries. "It would be a noble thing," she wrote, "to use hygiene as the hand-maid of civilization." She said that "Sanitary laws should be as much a part of the regime of India as the Civil Government itself", and we can perhaps claim that in following up that rule the British have given great benefits to India.

When the Indian Commission made its report, she set to work to get its recommendations carried out. Here she was helped by the fact that she knew, and was friendly with, men in high places. Lord Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, worked in close sympathy with her. Then, to her great joy, when, in 1861, a new Viceroy was appointed, the man chosen was Lord Lawrence. He was one of her greatest friends, and warmly sympathized with all her ideas. She felt it one of the happiest days of her life when he went to take up his great post. Lawrence worked hard not only for the health of the army, but for that of the Indian population. Gradually progress was made, and by 1894 Florence had the satisfaction of knowing that sanitary officials were to be set up for every Indian town with over 25,000 inhabitants. How enlightened she was we can tell from her booklets "How people may live and not die in India". For the troops she wanted gardens and games, gymnasiums and cricket grounds. For the whole people she wanted sanitation, water, and better food. She wrote *Life or Death by Irrigation*, in which she said, "the

main causes of disease in India are want of drainage and want of water supply ", and pointed out that through irrigation more food could be grown, and thus famine prevented, and the whole standard of life raised. Her lesson, preached in 1860, has not yet been fully learned, though to-day irrigation has indeed begun to bring life to millions in India.

## 2. *The " Sick-poor " and the Paupers.*

She lived quietly and comfortably by herself, settling down at last in No. 10 South Street, Park Lane. Her household affairs were all managed for her by Mrs. Sutherland, who found the house, managed the domestic staff, and did the housekeeping. Dr. Sutherland dealt with her immense correspondence, and arranged all her interviews. After her father's death she was a rich woman, but she would proudly say that though she received hundreds of begging letters, and though the soldiers in the Crimea had known her to be rich, yet she never once received any letter from a soldier begging from her. The men had given to her fund, they never themselves asked her for money.

As she grew older, her sympathies seem to have grown wider, while at the same time in some ways she mellowed and grew gentle. Once entirely preoccupied with the soldiers and army reforms, she now began to take an interest in the state of the poor as a whole. Her investigations into general hospitals, and the state of public health in England, had brought home to her the miserable plight of those of the poorer classes who, for various reasons, could not go to hospital when ill, and had to be nursed at home. There they could get little care, and certainly no skilled nursing.

So she set to work on a plan to provide some sort of proper nursing in the homes of the workers. She worked for "District Nurses", who would go into the homes of the poor and nurse those who were ill. She helped in the establishment of the "Jubilee" and the "Queen's Nurses". Then she went on to fight for the most helpless of all poor people, the paupers in the workhouses. The Poor Law Act of 1834 had established workhouses, and, in theory, poor-law infirmaries where "the sick poor" could be nursed. We know that the workhouses proved cruel and in many cases hopeless institutions. *Oliver Twist* drew all England's attention to the lot of the poor-law child. Florence found out how dreadful were the conditions in the "infirmaries", and she set to work to remedy them. She was greatly helped by Rathbone, the rich philanthropist of Liverpool. He specially wished to reform nursing in the workhouses. Through him, Florence got a special school for infirmiry nurses set up at Liverpool. There, under a wonderful woman, Agnes Jones, women were trained for poor-law infirmaries, and gradually these nurses were employed all over the country. She wanted those people who had to go to the workhouse infirmiry because they were too ill to be nursed in their homes, or had no one in their own homes to nurse them, to be distinguished from the "pauper" who was in the workhouse from poverty and lack of employment. She wanted all ill people to be cared for in what she called "appropriate institutions", not pushed into the poor-law infirmaries with all the indignities, squalor, and even worse which that involved. She specially wanted the medical relief of London, that vast city with its huge slum population, to be put under one central authority. In her day not only were the actual "slums" vile beyond belief, but

even in fairly decent districts, hundreds of people lived in cellar basements, damp and cold, and utterly unhealthy. These conditions were unknown in country areas, and even in many cities, for the value of London building sites made cellar basements common, while they were unknown to the manufacturing north. So she considered that London, with its special problems, ought to have special attention.

Next she took up the cause of the pauper children. Many of these were orphans; there were no less than 50,000 in London workhouses alone. Many other children were in the workhouses because their fathers had lost their jobs and had gone into "the House" with their families. Those children were often mixed up with the other inmates, with the old and the imbecile. Florence held that they should be separated, and should indeed not be in the workhouse at all. All children, she thought, should be taken out of the workhouses and cared for separately in special homes. In all those ways she was a true pioneer, and to-day many of these reforms which she urged are being carried through.

### 3. *The Battle of the Nurses.*

She saw, in her lifetime, the founding of the Metropolitan District Nursing Association, with at its head one of the nurses trained in her school at St. Thomas's Hospital.

Oddly enough, to us, she objected to the state registration of nurses, which involved the passing of a test and the issuing of certificates to women who qualified. She opposed this, because she believed nursing was a "vocation", and she maintained there could be no "test" for a good nurse. She always stressed the importance of thinking of the patient as an individual, whose ideas—or



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Photo. S. G. Payne & Son

ONE OF FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE'S LAST PORTRAITS





even "fancies"—ought to be considered, and she believed that too much importance might be given to the passing of examinations, and too little to the individual gift, especially to that "sympathy" which she held nurses should have, and which in her heart she thought many women lacked. This may strike us as odd, for outwardly she was not a warmly sympathetic woman herself, but she had herself the instinct to know what helped in healing, and this perhaps accounts for her ideas. This struggle was called the "Battle of the Nurses", and we must be sorry that for once Flo's ideas seem to be reactionary. But as she grew older, she had become more and more "mystical" in her religious ideas, and she took this spirit with her into her views on the nursing profession. She believed that nursing was a well-nigh sacred calling. She said nurses should be trained to be "hand-maids of the Lord", and that their technical training must be accompanied by "moral and religious" training. Thus she wrote a series of talks, called "Hospital Sermons", which were read to the Nightingale nurses. She believed that to unite all qualified nurses in a register "would sacrifice a high calling", that it would lead to "mere money-getting, and a mechanical view of nursing". She did not believe that any test, or examination, imposed on those to be registered would really show that they were fit to be nurses. "You cannot select the good from the inferior by any test . . . you can only work through supervision, tests or examinations which they receive in their training-school or hospital, not by any examination proposed by an outside body . . . those who would come off best in such outside tests would probably be the ready and forward, not the best nurses." She also believed that in very few places did nurses receive the thorough training

which she knew they obtained at St. Thomas's, and she was afraid that the lower standards might reduce the general level of training. When the battle was at its height, she wrote: "O God of Battles steel thy soldiers' hearts against happy-go-luckiness, against courtiership" (a hit against the Royal patronage of the new association), "and mere money-making on the part of the nurses and their Societies."

She lost the battle; the Royal British Nursing Association was given its charter in 1893. She took her defeat well, and said that "forty years hence such a scheme might not be preposterous, provided the intermediate time be successfully employed in levelling up, that is, in making all nurses at least equal to the best-trained nurses of this day, and in levelling up Training Schools". Actually compulsory registration of nurses finally came in 1919, when much had been done on the lines of which she approved.

Her developing interest in the condition of the masses naturally led her on to see how the root of much ill-health was to be found in bad housing. How could people be well in the frightful dwelling of the late Victorian slums? So she began to interest herself in schemes for better housing for the poor. She sympathized warmly with the work done by the pioneer of housing reform, Octavia Hill, and contributed largely to her schemes for buying up slum property and "reconverting" it.

Then she went on to prison reform. She joined the Howard League, and gave all the weight of her renown to help in that movement. Indeed, we can say that she interested herself, and supported, most of the movements of this period for social reform.

#### 4. *Women's Rights.*

As her long life went on, she became always more clearly convinced that women ought to take more part, and more intelligent part, in the life of the nation. She fretted at the incompetence of women outside their homes. She knew that women had the capacity, if they would but use it. Sidney Herbert's wife in the long past days had acted as her husband's secretary, and helped him most intelligently, and yet Florence herself never found any woman whom she considered fit to do her endless secretarial work. She always used her men friends. The poet, Arthur Hugh Clough, was one of her closest friends, and she worked him to death over her business. He it was, too, who could very rarely induce her to leave her home and go for a brief "cure" to Malvern. She had Mrs. Sutherland to run her house, and the devoted "Aunt Mai" was an invaluable helper in domestic matters. But we have to note how almost invariably she chose men as her helpers and intellectual companions. Her isolated, invalid life perhaps cut her off from the chance of meeting some of the able women who were coming to the fore at the close of the nineteenth century. When she was young, she had ardently wished she "could go to College", but that was thought quite out of the question. Now, by the 'nineties, women's colleges were flourishing at Oxford and Cambridge; schools for girls had raised the whole level of women's education; state education had become compulsory, and yet she does not seem to have been much interested in this practical, indeed essential, step in the progress of women.

She strongly believed that all women should play their part as citizens, and therefore, when the movement to give

women the vote began to take shape, she was warmly in favour. "That women should have the suffrage," she wrote, "no one can be more deeply convinced than I." She herself knew she had exercised immense political influence, but that did not prevent her thinking that women less gifted and less influential should have political power. She admitted, too, that though she considered many women incompetent, her Crimean experiences had taught her once and for all how devastating could be the incompetence of men.

She was also extremely interested in the movement for the "Married Women's Property Act". Up to the latter half of the century, a woman's property, when she married, passed to her husband, and ceased to belong to the woman. Even a married woman's earnings belonged to her husband. The rich could protect their daughters by "marriage settlements", tying up the capital for the girl and her children, but that still left the husband control of the income, and only the wealthy could afford the legal cost of such arrangements. Now an Act was brought in whereby a married woman would keep her own property. Florence was herself wealthy, and being unmarried had no one to control her finances, but she felt strongly that just as the single woman needed the independence of a career, so the married woman needed the independence of control of her own money.

Thus we see that, in spite of her increasing age, she did not become narrow and unprogressive. On the contrary, she widened her outlook, and was in sympathy with the progressive ideas of the new age.



## CHAPTER XV

## Close of a Great Career

One other change is noticeable in her. She had not found any true outlet for her feelings in her family, and she had denied herself the happiness of married life. When she was young she had been devoted to some of her girl friends, but life had separated her from them. All her middle life she had neither shown affection nor seemed to require it. But when old age drew near, she developed the warmest, indeed really a sentimental affection for some of the young nurses at her training school. It is not uncommon for old people to grow sentimental towards the young; clearly they find something specially touching to their affections in youth. So we find her writing, in 1879 (when she was nearly seventy years old), to one of the nurses: "Dearest, my dearest, very precious to me is your note. . . . I expect you, and be sure that the word 'trouble' is not known where you are concerned." Some people have disliked this phase in her, but we may recognize it as a development which does come to old people who have somehow missed affection during their lives. Queen Elizabeth, in the warm feeling she showed for young Essex, is a similar case, and we may even see something of the same sort in Flo's great contemporary, Queen Victoria, who also developed most sentimentally in her old age.

Her life was very quiet and very orderly. She spent a good deal of time in bed, the rest on the sofa. She was very careful of her appearance. Generally she wore, when

up, a black silk dress, and she always wore a scarf of real lace over her still abundant thick white hair. She said: "A gentlewoman must wear real lace, or none at all." With her clear, grey eyes, and rosy fair complexion, she always remained picturesque and charming.

Her house was very well run. Occasionally she had favoured people to stay with her, and she always made a note of anything they preferred in the way of food.

She never had any warm feeling for her sister; she could apparently never forget the bitter misery Parthe had caused her in the past. They were neighbours in South Street, but Parthe might never come up and see her without leave, though her husband, Sir Harry Verney, was allowed, and indeed expected, to drop in every day. Parthe died in 1890. Now only Florence's mother was left. Towards her she did show signs of softening. Once she made a tremendous effort and took her mother on a visit. But her letters then showed what an effort it was to her, and how the task of waiting on her feeble old mother, done as a duty, brought back like a flash the bitterness of her youth. She wrote to a friend: "Stranger changes than mine in life few have had—from slavery to power, and from power to slavery again . . . this is the only time for the past twenty-two years that my work has not been the first cause for how I should live . . . this is the caricature of a life."

When old Mrs. Nightingale lay dying her rambling talk showed how she too went back to that unhappy past. "Where is Florence?" she asked. "I suppose she will never marry now." And again, she said to Flo herself: "Who are you? Oh! yes; I see you are Florence. Stay with me. Do not leave me. It makes me so happy to see you sitting by me." Theirs had been a tragedy of

two opposed ideas as to the right way in which a woman should spend her life.

The close of Florence's life is in many ways very sad. She lived to such a great age that almost all those near and dear to her died before her. Sir Harry Verney died in 1894, and she said she missed him very much. The great Benjamin Jowett had been the man to whom she turned with her religious difficulties. He too died and no one took his place. She still had all her faculties, and when Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee came in 1897, she showed one more flash of her old vigour. A great exhibition was arranged to celebrate the event, and Flo was asked to send various "relics" of the Crimea and of herself. "Oh!" she wrote, "the absurdity of people! And the vulgarity! The 'relics' of the Crimean War, what are they? They are first the tremendous lessons we have had to learn from its tremendous blunders and ignorance. Next, they are Trained Nurses, and the progress of Hygiene. *These* are the relics of the war. I will *not* give my foolish Portrait or anything else as relics. It is too ridiculous. You don't judge of the victuals inside a public-house by the sign outside. I won't be made a *sign* at the Exhibition."

Then, mercifully perhaps for her, her mental powers failed. Gradually and placidly she lost all knowledge of what went on around her. She had never wished for fame or recognition. With complete irony, now, when her mind had gone, official honour came to her. She was at length, in 1907, given the distinction of being the only woman to receive the Order of Merit. Whether she knew what was happening is more than doubtful. She lay quiet in her bed, an old woman, and as the medal was pinned to her breast, she just murmured the words: "Too kind,

too kind." The City of London, in the next year, gave her the "freedom" of the City.

She died on 10th August, 1910. True to herself, she had directed that she should have not only a private funeral with not more than two people to follow her body, but what may almost be called an unknown grave. She was buried at Lea Hurst beside her parents, and her tombstone has not even her name, only the inscription, "F. N., 1820-1910". She herself had written: "What greater reward can a good worker desire than that the next generation should forget her and regard the work done as obvious."

Yet her fame should be undying. Herself a heroine in her self-sacrifice and toil, she accomplished far more than she realized. She gave the world nurses trained to look after the ill. She did much to save the British army both from death and illness, and she helped to raise the whole standard of life amongst the troops, and later amongst the poor. She helped, in so far as she could, endless movements to improve the lot of all who were suffering and oppressed.

Above all, she helped to set women free. Her own life showed what a woman could do, and the profession she opened to women was a door which, once set wide, could allow women to stream out from the prison of Victorian life. And so, like that of all pioneers, "her work liveth for ever more", and her name and fame is known to the whole world.









